THE SHORT STORY MAGAZINE

ARGOSY

FEBRUARY, 1957

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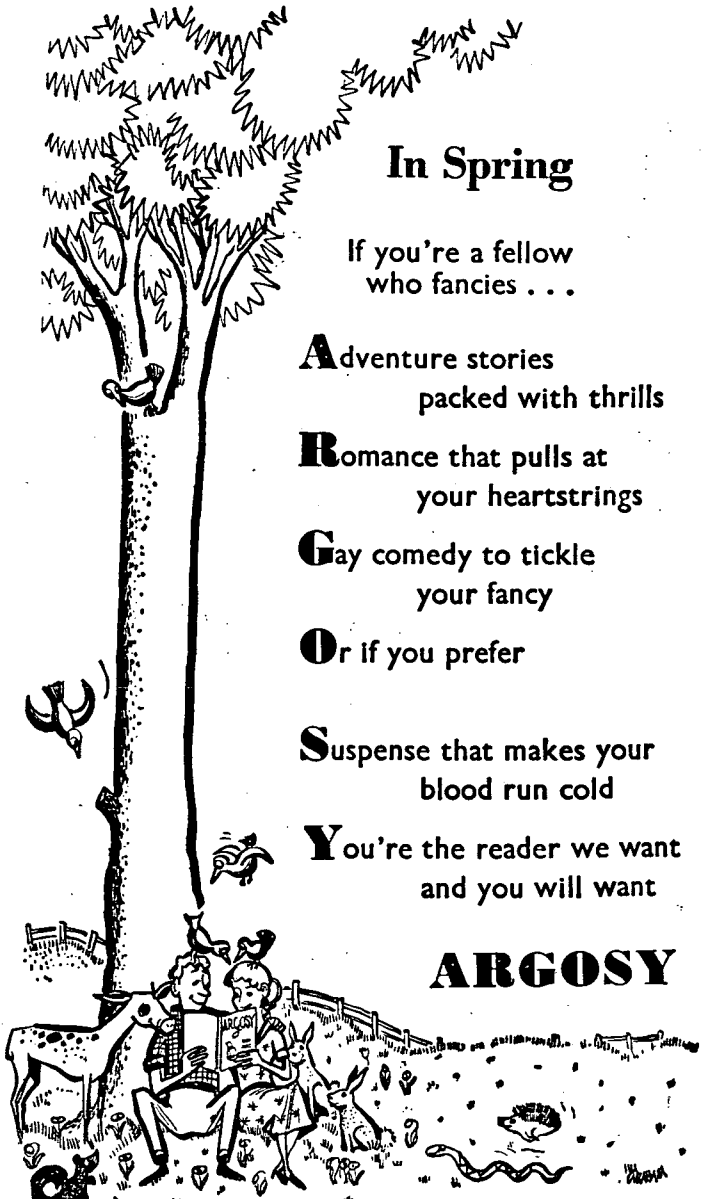

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ARGOSY

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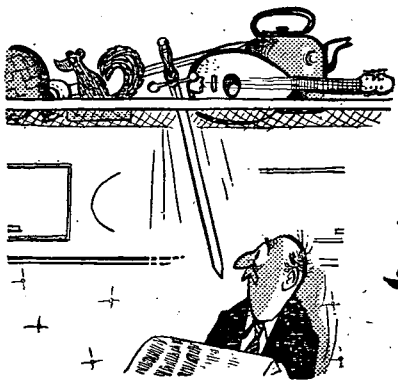

Log Book

BUYING a set square for threepence in a railway lost-property sale-room recently we began to speculate on why people leave all these odd articles in trains. It was easy enough to account for the footballs, or for the mandolin, left, no doubt, by some irate troubadour who, after making the trip out to Twickenham, found his love glued to the television, with curtains drawn, deaf to all his warblings. And the swords—surely a bargain at twenty-two and six?—conjured up a vision of dawn at Virginia Water, top hats, frock-coats, bearded doctors shaking their heads over the vicomte's mortal wound, the eight-ten chugging bleakly away from it all.

"Dubois."

"Yes, milord?"

"I shall never fight another duel. Leave the épée in the rack, I do not wish to see it again. He died nobly, Dubois, nobly."

"Yes, milord."

The copper kettle, naturally, was left by some Russian nobleman in a fit of rage when the footboy Vassily, told to brew up the samovar on the long, terrible journey from Liverpool Street to Tilbury, came back to report that he was unable to extract any water from either Hot or Cold.

And the stuffed squirrel? Abandoned by a rebellious husband when for the seventh time he had to take the dratted thing back to the taxidermist for rewhiskering.

One thing we failed to see anywhere in this fascinating medley was a copy of Argosy. We know from readers that they always take it on a journey (and we also learnt with pleasure from Lady Barnett's memoirs that her uncles considered it a suitable gift for a travelling niece) so we assume that Argosy is the one piece of

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property people remember to take with them when they get out of the train.

A witty journalist once remarked that anybody writing for the papers should bear in mind that he was writing for an elderly lady, in Hastings, with two cats of whom she is passionately fond. We are asking readers this month to take a good look at their Argosy-reading friends and send us in a pen-portrait of the person they consider to be the typical Argosy reader. Under thirty words, please, and no libel. Send entries on a postcard, by February 10, to The Editor, Argosy, The Fleetway House, London E.C.4. Two guineas will be awarded to the most entertaining entry. Results of November competition on page 25.

Irwin Shaw was born in New York City in 1913 and educated in Brooklyn. For two years he produced radio serials and comic-strip dramatizations; next he turned to screen and stage plays and had a hit on Broadway with *Bury the Dead.* Life as a private in the U.S. army supplied him with material for *The Young Lions.* Other works are *Sailor Off the Bremen, Welcome to the City* (short stories), *Lucy Crown.* Shaw is large, fond of football and hard-boiled understatement, married, politically liberal.

Two old friends meet in this issue of Argosy, for **Robert Sheckley** learnt some of his craft in a New York University writing course given by Irwin Shaw. During this course Sheckley also met the girl who later became his wife, so by and large it was an eventful time.

John Kruse, who ended the war as a Major, got a job as a tea-boy in film studios at fifty shillings a week when he was demobbed in 1946. His assistance with camera work for *Moby Dick*—using real whales—may have helped win some of the film's applauding remarks from critics; his story *Hell Drivers* which we

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printed last year is being filmed at Pinewood. Kruse now writes full-time: that is, for ten months in the year he works a hundred-hour writing week, for the remaining two months he and his wife travel to any land that has a sea, where they fish, sunbathe, drink, dance, make friends, and talk in as many languages as they can muster.

Robert Close left school at fourteen to see the world from the deck of a windjammer. Australian-born, he lived on board a six-ton cutter on the Côte d'Azur for two years, is now in Paris. At present he is at work on a novel on modern Australian crime, and a folk-lore musical.

Dal Stivens, Australian author and journalist, was born in 1911, educated in Sydney, has worked on many Australian papers. He was with the Army Education Service in the war and became P.R.O. for the Australian Minister for Information. In 1949 the Australian Government awarded him a Commonwealth Literary Fellowship worth £600. He has freelanced successfully in England and America; works include *The Courtship of Uncle Henry* and *The Gambling Ghost and Other Tales.*

JOHN SILVER

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A PATRICK PETRELLA STORY

NOTHING HAPPENS ON HIGHSIDE

The prison grape-vine must have missed out on it

BY MICHAEL GILBERT

TO Detective Constable Patrick Petrella the section called Highside was the least interesting part of the manor. It stretched, like the lives of its inhabitants, from the Lying-In Hospital at the foot of the hill to the public cemetery at the top; a honeycomb of tight, respectable streets constructed, as an act of faith, out of yellow brick and second-quality slates by a tight, respectable builder.

The backbone of Highside was Haig Road, and Petrella was walking up it to see a Mr. Gosport who might be able to give him some information about two other men, who might know something about alleged irregularities at the railway depot. A thunderstorm had been hanging about over North London all day. The evening was heavy with undischarged artillery; and his feet kept reminding Petrella that he had been on top of them for fifteen hours.

Ahead of him, out of a side road, came Sir Douglas Haig. That was what it seemed like at the time. It was all there, the neat, compact figure, the clipped grey moustache, the kindly, ruthless eye; the eye of Bapaume and Passchendaele, the eye of the Ancre and the Somme.

He was walking well, for a man of his age. But that was right, too, thought Petrella; had not the Field Marshal kept his mind and his figure to the last? Suppose that great men were condemned to visit every street and square and public house named after them. The Duke of Wellington and Prince Albert would

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have walked a few miles and drunk a few pints before they won their way to paradise.

When he reached the top of the hill, the Field Marshal had disappeared. No—as you were. Petrella, standing on the corner of the pavement, could see his head. He had gone into the cemetery, and was sitting—or was he kneeling?—by one of the new white marble crosses.

Petrella trudged on. Mr. Gosport was not at home. Mrs. Gosport explained that he was "on nights" now. He might be back in time for breakfast. It all depended on shifts. Or that was what *he* said. She had no way of checking up on him. Sometimes he said he'd been working a double shift and came home full of beer. Once she'd found a girl's hair clip wedged in his top pocket. He hadn't tried *that* lark twice.

Petrella listened with a quarter of his mind and made sympathetic noises at the right places. When he got out he went back to the cemetery. The grey man was gone. Petrella found a new cross, and squatted beside it to read the spidery gothic lettering.

Arthur Millichip
The summons came for him in his 84th year
At rest awaiting the last call

A boy and a girl were walking together on the pavement opposite. Petrella couldn't see them, but he heard the boy say, "... Swing in a lovely centre and Sam just nodded it into the net." The girl said, "Go on." She even managed to sound interested. Courting, thought Petrella. He won't get away with spiels like that once he's married.

He could have gone home himself, to supper and bed. So far as he kept any hours he was long past the end of his duty, and the house where he lodged with Mrs. Catt was only two streets off. Instead, he trudged back to the Police Station.

As he was climbing the stairs to the C.I.D. room he heard Sergeant Gwilliam laughing. It was the sort of laugh that took more than a locked door to contain it. There was sixteen stone of Sergeant Gwilliam, but very little of it was fat and he had played Rugby football for the police in the golden prewar days when the blue jerseys had carried all before them in London Club football.

"What's the joke?" said Petrella.

"Guess who just came in?"

"I'm too tired to guess."

"Ginny Lewis."

"Came in, or was brought in?" asked Petrella. Ginny was a hard character, past his first evil youth; a middle-aged bully grown callous in wrongdoing.

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" Walked in on his own feet. The joke is what he came here for."

Petrella could think of nothing save force that would bring Ginny to a police station.

" He came," said Sergeant Gwilliam, impressively, " to see could he have police protection! "

Petrella laughed, too, but absent-mindedly. Something was nibbling at the edges of memory.

When he got home, he was almost too tired to eat, and fell into his bed and to sleep. It was not the easy sleep of comfortable tiredness and relaxation. He was so near the surface that he saw the lightning, and was wide awake before the thunder rattled the slates of the little house. Then the rain came, in a steady drumming roar, and passed on.

It was in the silence that followed that the still, small voice of conscience said to Petrella, " Of course, you fool, you were looking at the wrong grave."

It took no more than three minutes to throw on some clothes and then he was out in the street, belting his raincoat as he went. The stars were hidden, but the air felt cooler, and there was a tinkle of fresh water running down the gutters. He climbed the cemetery railings without difficulty—they were designed to keep the children out, not the dead in. On the gravel path he paused for a moment. It was not going to be so easy to find the exact spot he wanted.

When he had stood on the pavement earlier in the evening, he had seen the grey man's head. And the man had been sitting, or squatting down. Later, when he himself had knelt beside one of the graves, a young couple had passed, and he had been quite unable to see either of them. *Therefore he had been too far down the slope.* A good deal too far.

The best plan would be to locate Arthur Millichip and move uphill and to the right from there. He used his torch sparingly: there were houses overlooking the cemetery and the last thing he wanted was a prowl car on the scene. He could almost hear Sergeant Gwilliam laughing.

Away to the south, over the Kent and Surrey hills, the lightning played and the thunder cracked and grumbled. An occasional single heavy spot of rain fell on him out of the black ceiling of the clouds. He found Arthur Millichip when he had almost given up hope. At rest, awaiting the last call.

Up the hill now. When he saw the other cross, it was obvious how he had made his mistake. Both were white and both were new. Mass produced, probably by the same monumental mason

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who had his little shop outside the gates. Petrella hooded his torch, and squatted down.

The moment he read what was there, all his fears became cold certainties.

He stepped back onto the path, trotted to the gate, and hauled himself over. A rapid calculation. Two minutes to the nearest call box. Say ten minutes if he ran, straight down the hill, to the Police Station. Speed was impossible under that black pall of darkness. He chose the phone box.

Sergeant Gwilliam answered the call himself. It took him a few seconds to understand what Petrella was talking about. Then he said, " I'll get a car to pick you up at Four Ways."

Less than three minutes later—perhaps five in all from the moment he had read what was engraved on the tombstone, Petrella was in the C.I.D. room talking to Sergeant Gwilliam. " Annie Lewis," he said, " wife of George Lewis, née Cole. And it was Cole I saw this afternoon. I'm sure of that, although I've only seen photographs. He was sent up before I came here."

" Slowly, lad, slowly," said Sergeant Gwilliam. " Let's look at the fences before we jump them. I know Harry Cole well enough. It was me pulled him in. And his daughter, Annie, married Ginny Lewis, sure enough. And Lewis and Cole worked as a pair. Housebreaking, screwing, a little smash-and-grab. But mostly plain, quiet screwing."

" When you sent Cole up for his long stretch," said Petrella, " why didn't Lewis go with him? "

" It was five years ago," growled the Sergeant. " I believe there was some trouble between them."

" Did Lewis buy himself out by turning Cole in? "

" Not exactly. But there was something . . ." The Sergeant put his hand through his hair and stared at the discoloured spot above the door, which looked like old dried blood, but was really a leaking water pipe. " I'd say that Cole stood the rap for both of them," he said at last. " Lewis was a younger man. And married to Cole's daughter, you see."

" Yes," said Petrella. He knew enough about professional criminals to know that this could be true. " But if Cole thought Lewis hadn't kept *his* part of the bargain—"

" If he thought that," said Sergeant Gwilliam, simply, " there'd be trouble."

The telephone sounded.

Sergeant Gwilliam listened like a man who has been expecting nothing but bad news, and at the end of it said, " Thank you very much," and replaced the receiver reverently on its cradle. " That was Central," he said. " I put an inquiry through to

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them after your call. You are quite right. Cole was released from Parkhurst after breakfast yesterday morning."

Petrella caught a glimpse of himself in the glass as they went out of the door. His pyjama collar had somehow escaped from the neck of the sweater he had pulled hastily over it, and was sticking up through the collar of his raincoat. He jabbed it back with nervous fingers.

The car was still waiting. "Cadsand Cottages," said Gwilliam to the driver. "Stop when you get to the end of the road, and turn your lights out." And to Petrella, as they ran along the empty High Street, "No wonder Ginny asked for protection."

Petrella agreed. He had seen Harry Cole's face only twice; once in a photograph, once that evening. It was a face with the composed remoteness of a thinker or a killer.

"Stop here," said Gwilliam to the driver. "You can put the car across the end of the road, with the lights out. If anyone comes running, grab them."

The driver, a long gloomy man called Happy, said, "If you say so, Sergeant," and Gwilliam and Petrella got quietly out. They took care not to bang the car doors. It was very dark but the rain had stopped.

"Ginny lives in the end cottage," said Gwilliam. "He's alone now, since Annie died."

That was the last thing said. After that, they felt their way. Down the stone-paved lane, across the litter that was part garden, part builder's yard, round the side of the ramshackle brick building.

The Sergeant gave a grunt of displeasure. The back door was ajar. Then they were standing in a small room—a kitchen, by the stale smell of it. And a tap was dripping somewhere. Gwilliam's big torch opened up like a searchlight. It was aimed at the ceiling. In the middle of the grey plaster was a darker mark, the size of a plate. In the middle of the plate something gathered; and another drop fell down to the stone floor with a soft splash.

Upstairs, on the floor of his overfurnished bedroom, lay the empty carcass of Ginny Lewis. He had been neatly butchered and left to lie. There was no one else in the house.

After that there was a lot to be done. For Petrella, pressed down by the double weight of the night and of a mortal weariness, things seemed to pass in slow-motion. First the cars arrived, then the doctor, then the men with flashlights and cameras, and policemen, and more policemen, and a real, white-haired Chief Superintendent who, although it was only five o'clock in the

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morning, had somehow found time to shave his pink chin before coming to Cadsand Cottages.

Petrella, forgotten, propped up the jamb of the kitchen door. The bulk of Sergeant Gwilliam loomed down upon him. "Go to bed," he said. "There's nothing you can do here."

"Any sign of Cole?"

"Not a sausage. But we've put the net out. Incidentally, it looks as if Ginny was carrying a gun. Only he didn't reach it quick enough."

"Then Cole's probably got the gun in his pocket now."

"Probably," said Sergeant Gwilliam. "It won't make any difference. We'll pick him up as soon as it's light."

Remembering that calm and masterful eye, Petrella did not feel so sure. He cadged a lift in a returning car to the foot of Highside and walked off up the hill. The storm, which had been grumbling about in the background like a much-enduring woman, put out a last long venomous tongue of lightning, and showed Petrella Harry Cole.

He was sitting on a flat gravestone in the cemetery, his head on his hands. Petrella's first thought was, if they hadn't all been half asleep, that was just exactly where the search should have started. Then he had jumped the railing, and was walking steadily along the grass verge.

Cole was sitting up now. He had Ginny's gun all right. It was in his hand, and his hand was resting on his knee, steady as the stone beneath him. There was enough light in the sky now to see by. Morning was not far away.

"Sit down," said Cole. "Don't come any nearer."

Petrella hesitated for a moment, then his tired legs folded under him, and he sat. They both sat, he on one forgotten moss-covered slab, Harry Cole on another, with the new white headstone shining between them.

"She was my daughter," said Cole at last. "You knew that?"

"I found out tonight," said Petrella.

"A cheap piece of stone. If you killed your wife, you'd give her something better than that, wouldn't you?"

"I'm not married," said Petrella.

"He didn't even pay for it himself. First he let her die, then he put her away under a cheap white stone he never even paid for himself."

"I don't—"

"The doctor called it malnutrition. You're educated. You know what that means, I suppose?"

"I don't—"

"It means the bastard starved her to death. I know. I was

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in Parkhurst. They've got a good news service there. It isn't printed. It comes to you along the hot-water pipes, in the evening."

Petrella said, "Look here—" but he might as well have tried to stop a gramophone by talking against it.

The light was coming up fast, and the little cold morning wind blew into his face. His fingers touched something small and hard. It was the extension switch of his torch. The torch itself was somewhere behind his back slung to the belt of his raincoat. He started to joggle the switch. Three long—three short—three long. Someone must be looking from their window by now.

Time went by.

"You're young," said Cole suddenly. "Too young to understand what it is to hate. A man can live on hate. Did you know that?"

"It's a poor food," said Petrella. His fingers kept working.

"It can be meat and strong drink, and a fire to warm you through the long winter nights, when the heating isn't working in the cell, and you've nothing but one blanket over you. It was easy. He knew I was coming. He lived with fear. I lived with hate. It's a good bargain, boy."

"It's a foul bargain," said Petrella. He was suddenly quite cool, for he had heard the sounds he was waiting for. A car, coming fast, up the hill. When its lights went out and it stopped at the corner, he knew.

"There's one thing you didn't know," he said. "The grape-vine must have missed out on it. Ginny Lewis never killed your daughter. Neither killed her nor let her die."

"Why do you trouble to tell such lies, boy?"

"I'm not lying, and you know it." Look at him. Talk to him. Keep his attention. Big Gwilliam was over the wall behind Cole and coming with the fast, controlled rush that had once sent him across the line at Twickenham with half the English pack on his back.

The gun in Cole's hand shifted slightly. It gave a small, sad crack, and he folded onto the ground under an avalanche of bodies. But he was dead before they touched him.

That took a little time to sort out, too. And it was the uncomfortable hour of six when Petrella and Sergeant Gwilliam turned their backs on Highside Cemetery, and the body that still lay there.

"Funny," said Gwilliam, "that he should have gone without knowing that Ginny Lewis, whatever his sins, had no part in Annie's death. The prison grape-vine told him that Annie had died, and been buried by public funds. It forgot to tell him

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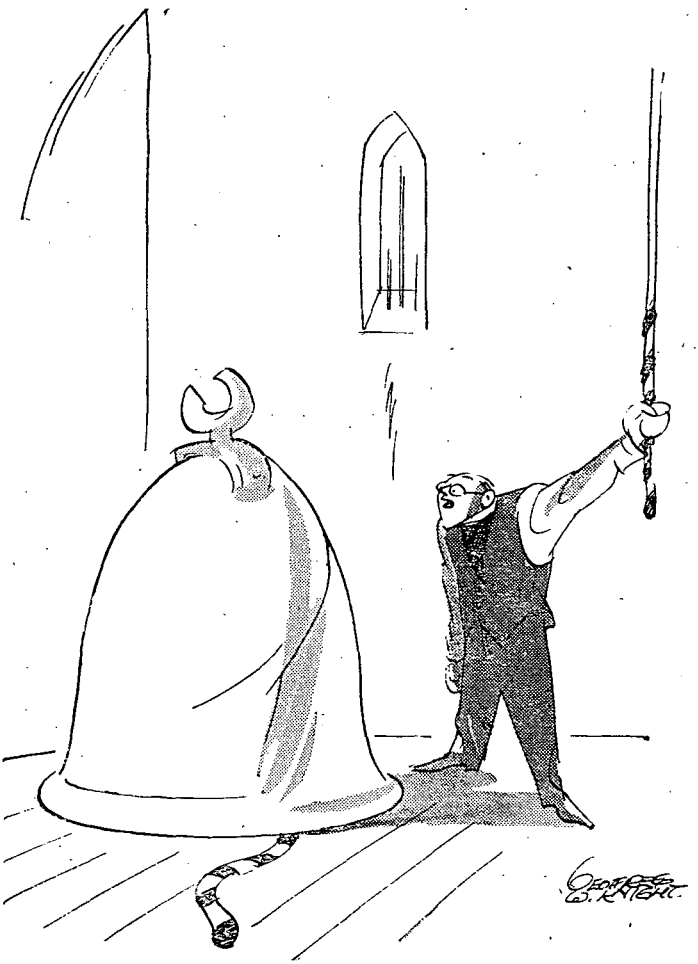
that Lewis was inside as well. On a two-year stretch for receiving."

They both turned and looked at the dead man, flat on the grass, like a doll with the stuffing out.

Petrella thought of Ginny Lewis. Two men, both empty. One empty with fear, the other empty with hate. He looked at his watch. If he hurried, he would just be in time to catch Mr. Gosport.



Mr. Scrimshaw! Mr. Scrimshaw!—are you all right?

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FEAR IN THE NIGHT

The steady ticking of the clock seemed filled with menace

BY ROBERT SHECKLEY

SHE heard herself screaming as she woke up and knew she must have been screaming for long seconds. It was cold in the room but she was covered with perspiration; it rolled down her face and shoulders, down the front of her nightgown. Her back was damp with sweat, and the sheet beneath her was damp.

Immediately she began to shiver.

"Are you all right?" her husband asked.

For a few moments she couldn't answer. Her knees were drawn up and she coiled her arms tightly around them, trying to stop shuddering. Her husband was a dark mass beside her, a long dark cylinder against the faintly glimmering sheet. Looking at him, she began trembling again.

"Will it help if I put on the light?" he asked.

"No!" she said sharply. "Don't move—please!"

And then there was only the steady ticking of the clock, but somehow that was filled with menace also.

"Did it happen again?"

"Yes," she said. "Just the same. For heaven's sake, don't touch me!" He had started to move towards her, dark and sinuous against the sheet, and she was trembling violently again.

"The dream," he began cautiously, "was it . . . was I . . .?" Delicately, he left it unvoiced, shifting his position on the bed slightly, carefully, so she wouldn't be frightened.

But she was getting a grip on herself again. She unclenched her hands, putting the palms hard and flat against the bed.

"Yes," she said. "The snakes again. They were crawling all over me. Big ones and little ones, hundreds of them. The room was filled with them and more were coming in the door, through the windows. The closet was filled with snakes, so full they were coming under the door onto the floor—"

"Take it easy," he said. "Sure you want to talk about it?"

She didn't answer.

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"Want the light on yet?" he asked her gently.

She hesitated, then said, "Not yet. I don't dare to just yet."

"Oh," he said in a tone of complete understanding. "Then the other part of the dream—"

"Yes."

"Look, perhaps you shouldn't talk about it."

"Let's talk about it." She tried to laugh but it came out a cough. "You'd think I'd be getting used to it. For how many nights now?"

The dream always began with the little snake, slowly crawling across her arm, watching her with evil red eyes. She flung it from her, sitting up in bed. Then another slithered across the covers, fatter, faster. She flung that one away too, getting quickly out of bed and standing on the floor. Then there was one under her foot and then one was coiled in her hair, over her eyes, and through the now-opened door came still more, forcing her back on the bed, screaming, reaching for her husband.

But in the dream her husband wasn't there. In the bed beside her, a long dark cylinder against the faintly glimmering sheets, was a tremendous snake. She didn't realize it until her arms were around it.

"Turn on the light now," she commanded. Her muscles contracted, straining against each other as light flooded the room. Her thighs tensed, ready to hurl her out of bed if . . .

But it was her husband after all.

"Dear lord," she breathed and relaxed completely, sagging against the mattress.

"Surprised?" he asked her, grinning wryly.

"Each time," she told him, "each time I'm sure you won't be there. I'm sure there'll be a snake there." She touched his arm just to make sure.

"You see how foolish it all is?" he said softly, soothingly. "If you would only forget. If you would only have confidence in me these nightmares would pass."

"I know," she said, drinking in the details of the room. The little telephone table was immensely reassuring with its litter of scribbled lists and messages. The scarred mahogany bureau was an old friend, as was the little radio, and the newspaper on the floor. And how sane her emerald-green dress was, thrown carelessly across the chair!

"The doctor told you the same thing," he said. "When we were having our trouble you associated me with everything that went wrong, everything that hurt you. And now that our troubles are over, you still do."

"Not consciously," she said. "I swear, not consciously."

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"But you do all the same," he insisted. "Remember when I wanted the divorce? When I told you I'd never loved you? Remember how you hated me then, even though you wouldn't let me go?" He paused for breath. "You hated Helen and me. That has taken its toll. The hate has remained under our reconciliation."

"I don't believe I ever hated you," she said. "Only Helen—that skinny little monkey!"

"Mustn't speak ill of those departed from trouble," he murmured.

"Yes," she said thoughtfully. "I suppose I drove her to that breakdown. I can't say I'm sorry. Do you think she's haunting me?"

"You mustn't blame yourself," he said. "She was high-strung, nervous, artistic. A neurotic type."

"I'll get over all this now that Helen's gone." She smiled at him and the lines of worry on her forehead vanished. "I'm so crazy about you," she murmured, running her fingers through his light brown hair. "I'd never let you go."

"You'd better not." He smiled back at her. "I don't want to go."

"Just help me."

"With all I've got." He bent forward and kissed her lightly on the cheek. "But, darling, unless you get over these nightmares—featuring me as the principal villain—I'll have to—"

"Don't say it," she murmured quickly. "I can't bear the thought. And we *are* past the bad time."

He nodded.

"You're right, though," she said. "I think I'll try a different psychiatrist. I can't stand much more of this. These dreams, night after night."

"And they're getting worse," he reminded her, frowning. "At first it was only once in a while but now it's every night. Soon, if you don't do something, it'll be—"

"All right," she said. "Don't talk about it."

"I have to. I'm getting worried. If this snake fixation keeps up, you'll be taking a knife to me while I'm asleep one of these nights."

"Never," she told him. "But don't talk about it. I want to forget it. I don't think it'll happen again. Do you?"

"I hope not," he said.

She reached across him and turned off the light, kissed him, and closed her eyes.

After a few minutes she turned over on her side. In half an hour she rolled over again, said something incoherent and was

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quiet. After twenty minutes more she had shrugged one shoulder but, other than that, made no motion.

Her husband was a dark mass beside her, propped up on one elbow. He lay in the darkness, thinking, listening to her breathing, hearing the tick of the clock. Then he stretched out at full length.

Slowly he untied the cord of his pyjamas and pulled until he had a foot of it free. Then he drew back the covers. Very gently he rolled towards her with the cord in his hand, listening to her breathing. He placed the cord against her arm. Slowly, allowing himself seconds to an inch, he pulled the cord along her arm.

Presently she moaned.

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SILVER TRUMPET

Bareback on the big white horse
Tommy sounded the alarm

BY STUART CLOETE

IT was hard to think of Mac ever having been a young man. About as hard as it would be for you chaps to think of me as young.

But I was then, and he was old. That sets us back damn near a hundred years from today. Back in the days of the Indian wars in America, and the Kaffir wars in Africa. Say the late 'forties or early 'fifties.

It began this way—with me asking Mac about his family, and if he'd ever had a kid. "Yes," he said, "I did, in a manner of speaking."

Now there's no mistaking a kid—either you have one or you haven't. So I said to him, "What do you mean, in a manner of speaking?"

"Well," he said, "it was this way. He was and he wasn't. I was going to buy him out of the army when the war was over. You could, you know," he said, "in them old red-coat days."

"Tell me," I said.

"Tommy was a trumpeter," he said. "The Colonel's trumpeter. Yes," he said, "that's what he was. A trumpeter."

Then he said, "I'd been cleaned out again. This was the third time. House burnt, cattle driven off, and me clear only by the skin of my teeth. Red Kaffirs," he said. "Painted devils. Paint themselves with clay—red ochre and grease.

"Lord, how they came down. Like wolves on a fold. Assegais shining in the sunlight, their kerries rattling against their shields. In the open they hadn't a chance against cavalry, but ambush was their game.

"Traps," he said, "and stratagems. Bloody silly to send cavalry against them in close country, it was, but they sent 'em. Dragoons—red devils we called 'em because they wore red tunics. A dull red like dry blood, and dark green trousers with a red stripe. Facings were green, too. Smart," he said. "Smart's the word—crack regiment, and well mounted and found. Fancy chaps like that in wild, broken country against naked Kaffirs that could slip through the bush like tigers."

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I watched him as he sat there looking out into the distance with old, faded blue eyes. His hands, big, gnarled like the twisted roots of some great tree, lay on the worn moleskin of his trousers.

The thighs that had once gripped wild young horses between them were now shrunken. Altogether, he was shrunk. The big bones remained. He had been a powerful man—very powerful indeed if the stories about him were even half true. But all one saw now was the structure to which the great muscles had once been strung.

It was no use trying to press Mac. He had to do it in his own way and his own time.

I joined 'em because they needed me. Spoke Kaffir, and the "Taal" too. Knew the country like the palm of my hand.

And that was how I came to know young Tommy, the Colonel's trumpeter.

Not more than fourteen he was, and small. But blow his trumpet? He'd fair rip the guts out of you with his calls. And ride? I could ride, too, but that boy was part of the horse.

Tommy's was a grey. All the trumpeters rode greys. But his pal was the drum horse. A big white called Ben that was the pride of the Regiment. Seventeen hands and a pet. Used to come to the door of the mess tent for bread and scraps. Drank beer and did tricks.

Well, Tommy spent all his time with that horse. Used to lead him about so he could graze. And it's my idea they talked to each other. So, naturally enough, when I got to know Tommy well, I got to know Ben.

It was a fine sight to see the two of them out together. The lad sharp as a needle, smart as they come with his silver trumpet fastened by a red cord on his back—never parted from it, he was; slept with it beside him—leading the white horse from one patch of grass to another. They both shone in the sunshine. They was happy and smiling.

For a while, when I joined them, there was nothing to do. We moved about a bit, but no fighting. Just a skirmish or two. A few Kaffirs that were caught in the open and speared by the long lances.

I used to go out with Tommy and Ben a lot. He liked the veld. Wanted stories.

Said, "What's this? What's that? What's the best grass for Ben? Is that bush poison?"

An' I told him. Then, as I say, we moved. A hundred miles or so we trekked and when we got there I said to the Colonel I

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didn't like it. " Sir," says I, " this ain't horse-soldier country. Look out," I said.

" How much farther we got ter go? " I asked.

" Fifty miles," said he. " But we'll wait here a day or two and send out scouts."

" Fifty miles," says I, " through that bush? " Man, it was thick as the hair on a lion's mane.

" Yes," he says.

" Sir," I says, " you'll have to lead."

" Yes," he says.

" And how can we fight if we're leading the horses? "

" No fighting," he says. " There's no Kaffirs here."

" There will be," I says.

" No," he says. " Our Intelligence says there's no one there."

Then I shut up because when they talked about their Intelligence there was nothing more to say.

By this time Tommy and I had fixed things up. He had no relations. He said he wanted to stay in Africa. He wanted to stay with me.

" You'll buy me out, Mac? " he says.

" I will," says I, " with the money I get when I'm paid off after the campaign."

Lord, I can see it now as if it was yesterday. The kid standing with his hand on Ben's shoulder. And the white lines of tents behind him. The lances piled like rifles, the men resting on the ground or going about on different fatigues . . .

Two days' wait to reconnoitre, and then a march through the mountains. Imagine it, leading the horses through the heavy bush and poorts in the hills. Mad, that's what they were, mad. The Intelligence says . . .!

A mounted orderly had come with news. The Colonel said that proved it. But it didn't. The Kaffirs weren't going to kill one man if they could get a regiment, and what could the scouts see, blundering about on their big horses?

No, oh no, they didn't want me to go scouting. I wasn't a soldier. A bloody ornament—that's what I was. Something to interpret if they got a prisoner and to tell 'em the best way to cross a drift. But no soldiering. Being regulars and crack at that, they didn't want no amateurs around.

" Don't like it, do you, Mac? " Tommy said.

" Sonny," I said, " I don't. And I told the old man, too."

" You told the Colonel? " he said, awed as if I'd said no to the Almighty.

" Yes," I said.

Well, that was the first day of our rest. And nothing to report.

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The second day it began. Though at that time no one knew it. It began with Ben being missing. He was grazing around camp one minute and gone the next.

Now it's a hard thing to understand the relationship between a boy and an animal. You see, boys ain't men yet, an' they're nearer to the wild things than we are. Sort of wild themselves and just mad ter love something. They ain't got to women yet, but they need love.

That's how Tommy was. No pa, no ma, just the Regiment for a home, and Ben. Well, he loved the Regiment, but it was sort of abstract, like. Like loving God, or the Church, or your country. But you can't kiss your country, you can't lie down beside her, you can't stroke her pink nose or bring her titbits. Well, that's the way Tommy was. An' Ben, being the drum horse, was the Regiment, in a way. A part of its soul, as it were, part of its music.

Lord, he was crying when he came ter me, and it took a lot ter make 'im cry.

"We gotter find 'im, Mac," he said, "we gotter!"

"Sure," I said, "why not? A bloody big white horse like that'll be easy enough to find. Like a great elephant," I said.

But he didn't like that. "Ben's not clumsy," he said. "Neat he is. Neat and clean on his pins."

I said I hadn't said he wasn't. I'd just wanted ter comfort him like. Anyway the big silly thing wouldn't have gone far.

"We gotter go after him," he said, "before they find he's gone."

Lord, he acted as if Ben'd lose his good-conduct stripe. Reduced to the ranks or something, if it was found out he'd strayed. So off we went.

I picked up his spoor easily enough and followed it. He'd gone down a game track that was as clear as a small road. I saw where he'd stopped for a bit, and where he'd drunk at a stream. But I didn't like it. I didn't say so to Tommy, but I kept wondering. What would the old chap go off like this for? He was moving fastish, too, with long strides. As if he was being chased. But there was no other spoor. Not what I was looking for—the spoor of a naked foot or a Kaffir sandal.

After we'd gone a couple of miles I said, "This is far enough. We're alone here an' too far from everybody." An' then we saw Ben.

He was standing in a glade with the sun shining on him. Very beautiful he looked, with his head up and his ears cocked. He must have heard or smelt us.

"Ben!" Tommy called, "Ben, come on home!"

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The horse began to move towards us. Then I heard a honey-bird call and saw something move in the bush. Something red with a black ostrich plume.

" Kaffirs," I said.

They must have driven the horse from the sides of the path so they'd leave no spoor. We turned and ran, and Ben galloped after us. I turned and saw a Kaffir coming. He had his assegai raised, but I shot him before he could throw it. Then I saw more Kaffirs and we plunged off the path into the bush.

" Take off that damn red coat," I said.

" Me uniform? " says he. " The Queen's uniform? Not I! " he says. And he wouldn't.

Then the horse came near us, looking for us, as it were. And then we heard the trumpets. *Boot and saddle* was the call. Orders must have been changed. They were going to move at once. Move into the trap that had been laid for 'em.

I saw them in my mind. I saw 'em move off, wheeling and forming a column of half sections, and then the order to dismount and lead. How can a man fight in jackboots, leading a bloody great English hunter that's full of good oats and forage?

Tommy knew it, too. He ran for the horse. " Help me up," he said. By now the Kaffirs were in front of us, and more behind. He had Ben's mane in his hand and I gave him a shove. There he sat, bareback on the big old horse, and, pulling round his silver trumpet, he set it to his lips. Lord, I can see him yet, wetting it and blowing out his cheeks till I thought they'd bust. Then he blew.

He sounded the alarm. He blew it twice, loud and clear. It was picked up in the camp. I fired at another Kaffir. I knew he'd never leave the horse. So I said, " Ride, Tommy, ride like hell."

" Good-bye," says he. He leans forward, shouts, " Charge! " sticks his heels into the big horse, and off they go thundering down the path. They burst through one bunch of savages, taking them by surprise, as I dodged into the bush. No paths for me.

Then I heard him blow the alarm again. You couldn't mistake my Tommy's blow. And this time there was no answering call. Then I heard shots. Carbine shots. The Colonel must have deployed his men and sent them into the fringe of the forest where the bush opened out a bit. And that was the last I heard, for I got into a deep gorge and moved away from the action. Took me two hours ter get back, but when I got there, I saw something had happened.

The Jack and Regiment's flag were at half mast and the men

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were standing about in groups with their guns in their hands. Then I saw Ben. He was standing with his head low and blood stained his quarters. The veterinary officer and the Colonel and some other officers and men were beside him.

I went up to them. "Where's Tommy?"

"Tommy's badly wounded," the Colonel said.

"They get him?" I said.

"In the side," the Colonel said, "but he got back with fifty Kaffirs after him."

"The alarm," I said.

"We heard it," the Colonel said. "The trumpeters here took it up without orders, and we were ready. Mr. Maclaren," he said—he always called me that; very purlite he was, and very blasphemous, too—"Mr. Maclaren, that boy saved us. We got new orders and were going to march in. But we had two men killed."

"I told you," I said. "I told you they was about. And now?"

"Now," he said, "I've sent for infantry. They'll drive 'em out and we'll take 'em on the flank when they break cover."

"Maybe," says I, an' I was right. They never broke cover, but turned back into the mountains where no red-coat 'ud ever catch 'em.

"Tommy," I said. I went to him then. He was lying in the hospital tent and going fast. He took my hand. "We saved 'em," he said, "and Ben's going to be all right, they say."

"He'll be all right," I said, "but what about you?"

"Me?" he said. "Me, Mac? You won't buy me out now, Mac."

"For why?" says I. "A week or two an' you'll be up and about."

"No, Mac," says he, "they got me! I'm off, Mac," says he, "I'm off upstairs. A good trumpeter'll come in handy up there, I hope. You see, they promised to let me take it with me. Yes," he said, "the Colonel himself said so when he comes in with the Padre. He promises it an' he promises a slap-up funeral, too, with me grey charger, an' me boots reversed, and a volley over me grave, an' me name in the annals of the Regiment. Mac," he said, "if I'd lived ter be a hundred instead of fifteen, the Regiment couldn't 'ave done no more. No, not even if I'd been the Sergeant-Major. You'll be there?" he said.

"I'll be there," I said.

Then some troopers came to the tent. "We've brought him, Tommy," they said. An' they had. The horse had to lower his head to get in through the flap, but he understood. That

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was a strange thing to see, the big horse, still all bloody, filling the tent, an' the Colonel, an' the Padre, an' the doctor, an' the vet, an' the other officers—all by my Tommy's bed. Bed . . . it was a stretcher. Ben had his head down, kissing him, like.

" I'm going, sir," says Tommy. " I can feel it."

" We're proud of you, Tommy," the Colonel says, and damn me if he didn't wipe his eyes.

" I got one more blow in me," says Tommy. " Sir, can I blow? " Then I saw his trumpet beside him.

" Help me up," he says ter the Padre.

" I watched him wet the trumpet reed," said Mac, " like he had in the forest not four hours ago. I watched him fill his cheeks and then she came. Lord, man, sweet as if an angel played. Know what the call was? Last Post. Tommy blowing himself out of this world and into the next.

" ' He's gone,' the Padre said.

" An' then there was no mistake about it. They was all crying. Crying like women. Which is good, because when a brave lad dies, someone should cry for him. An' then the old horse neighed. Stood with legs stretched out, his head up, and shrilled his last good-bye.

" Yes," said Mac—he rubbed a brown knuckle into his eyes, " I did have a kid, in a manner of speaking."

★ *Stuart Cloete is a favourite Argosy contributor. Born in Paris and educated in England, he served in the Coldstream Guards for eleven years, then did ten years' ranching in South Africa where he absorbed enough fascinating material for a lifetime's books. He has written, among others, Congo Song, Against These Three, Mamba; his latest book, African Giant, is a survey of present-day Africa. His wife, Rehna Cloete, recently produced The Nylon Safari, a hilarious skit on strong, silent travel books. At present, Cloete is in America. We look forward to more stories from him.*

SLOGAN COMPETITION RESULT

Readers were prolific with ideas for advertising slogans beginning with the initials **A-R-G-O-S-Y.** Indeed, two acrostic-minded competitors, Mr. Zeegan and Miss Cooke, managed to end with the initials too. Two guineas apiece goes to G. W. Alexander, Gloucester, and Mrs. A. M. Whillock, Honor Oak, S.E.23, who combined sparkle with sincerity. Captain Wilson, like Father Bear, gets a special mention for: Argosy Readers Go On Saying Year after Year, Who's Got My Argosy?

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Much ado there was, God wot!
He would love and she would not

NICHOLAS BRETON

Roses red and roses white
Plucked I for my love's delight.
She would none of all my posies, —
Bade me gather her blue roses.

Half the world I wandered through,
Seeking where such flowers grew;
Half the world unto my quest
Answered but with laugh and jest.

It may be beyond the grave
She shall find what she would have.
Oh, 'twas but an idle quest, —
Roses white and red are best!

RUDYARD KIPLING, *Blue Roses*

Don't Tempt Me

When she came to the king, she kneeled down to the yerth, thanking him of his succour, and so led him into the castle, to make him cheer and honour, as she that coud right well do it: every man regarded her marvellously; the king himself coud not withold his regarding of her, for he thought that he never saw before so noble, nor so fair a lady: he was stricken therewith to the heart, with a sparkle of fine love, that endured long after; he thought no lady in the world so worthy to be beloved as she. Thus they entered into the castle, hand in hand; the lady led him first into the hall, and after into the chamber, nobly apparelled; the King regarded so the lady that she was abashed. At last he went to a window to rest him and so fell in a great study: the lady went about to make cheer to the lords and knights that

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were there, and commanded to dress the hall for dinner. When she had all devised and commanded, then she came to the King with a merry cheer, who was in a great study, and she said, " Dear sir, why do ye study so sore? . . . Ye ought always to make good cheer, to comfort therewith your people: God had aided you so in your business, and hath given you so great graces, that ye be the most douted and honoured prince in all christendom . . ." " A, fair lady," quoth the king, " other things lieth at my heart that ye know not of: but surely the sweet behaving, the perfect wisdom, the good grace, nobleness and excellent beauty that I see in you, hath so sore surprised my heart, that I can not but love you, and without your love I am but dead." Then the lady said, " A, right noble prince, for God's sake mock nor tempt me not. I can not believe that it is true that ye say, nor that so noble a prince as ye be, would think to dishonour me and my lord, my husband, who is so valiant a knight, and hath done your grace so good service, and as yet lieth in prison for your quarrel; certainly, sir, ye should in this case have but a small praise, and nothing the better thereby . . ."

LORD BERNERS, *How the King of England was in Amours with the Countess of Salisbury*

Why Not?

PERPETUA *It remains for me to love you.*
DUKE *It has always been understood to be so easy.*
Why ever should you not? Am I, before
God, too old? Consider the rocks
Of Arizona, and then consider me.
How recently the world has had the pleasure
Of pleasing, the opportunity of knowing me.
Age, after all, is only the accumulation
Of extensive childhood: what we were,
Never what we are. Don't deliver me
Up to my grey hairs.

CHRISTOPHER FRY, *Venus Observed*

Last Word

" You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make *you* so . . . I wish you very happy and very rich, and by refusing your hand do all in my power to prevent your being otherwise."

JANE AUSTEN, *Pride and Prejudice*

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She Loves Another

"You in love with Elena!" Bersyenev repeated and stood still.

"Yes," Shubin continued in a tone of forced indifference, "does that surprise you? I'll tell you something else. Up to this evening I might have hoped that with time she would come to love me too. But today convinced me that I've nothing to hope for. She has come to love—someone else."

"Someone else? But who?"

"Who? You!" Shubin cried . . .

"What nonsense you're talking," Bersyenev said at length, with annoyance.

"No, it's not nonsense. What are we stopping for, anyway? Let's go on, it's easier walking. I've known her a long time, and I know her well: I can't be mistaken. She's taken a fancy to you. There was a time when she liked me; but in the first place I'm too frivolous a young man for her, whereas you're a serious creature, morally and physically a decent personality . . . And secondly, the other day Elena caught me kissing Zoya's arms!"

"Zoya's?"

"Yes, Zoya's. What do you expect? . . . . She's got nice shoulders."

"Shoulders?"

"Well, shoulders, arms, isn't it all the same? Elena caught me after dinner behaving in this rather free and easy way, and before dinner I'd been abusing Zoya in her presence. Unfortunately Elena doesn't understand the perfect naturalness of such contradictions. At this point you turned up; you're a man who believes in—now what do you believe in?—you blush, you get embarrassed, you agonize about Schiller and Schelling (she's always on the look-out for remarkable men) and so it is you win—while I, poor unfortunate one, try to make jokes and . . . in the meantime . . ."

Shubin suddenly began to weep and, walking to one side, he sat down on the ground grasping his hair.

IVAN TURGENEV, *On the Eve*, *translated by Gilbert Gardiner*

What Care I?

If she slight me when I woo,
I can scorn and let her go;
For if she be not for me,
What care I for whom she be?

GEORGE WITHER, *The Lover's Resolution*

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KISS AT CROTON FALLS

There he stood, on a Saturday night with that redheaded woman again

BY IRWIN SHAW

FREDERICK MULL was a huge rollicking man, with a russet moustache, but when they took the trolleys off Third Avenue and put him on a pension he sickened and died—he who had never missed a day of work in his life, except for drunkenness or wounds incurred in the kind of argument a man could not avoid from time to time in the company of high-spirited and honourable men.

It was bad enough when they took away his conductor and made him give the passengers their change himself in the front of the trolley, with all the traffic of New York charging and howling around him, but when they put the buses on and told him he'd have to learn how to drive if he wanted to stay with the company, he knew and the company knew he was finished.

All this shows how long ago it all was, when there was snow in the city every winter, and the lakes froze over, and all the comfortable brown buildings hadn't been torn down for brick-and-glass office slabs, and it didn't take all day to go from the Bridge to Yorkville by surface transport.

He had his faults. He drank whisky when he could afford it and beer when he couldn't, and they carried him home to his wife one night with concussion, lasting two days, which he got in a bar owned by a man named Mulloy near Fortieth Street, when defending the hanging of Roger Casement. His father had fought in the Union Army, under McClellan, and he was an unswerving patriot.

He was part everything, he said, because his father's family had come from the Midlands and his mother was one-eighth Indian. He had a slow, barrelling baritone, and when he had drunk one or two he would sing *Flow Gently, Sweet Afton* and *Good King Wenceslas* and *Oh! Susannah.* But most of all he was partial to *John Brown's Body Lies a-Mould'ring in the Grave* and *Who Is Sylvia?*

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According to his wife, he also had a weakness for women.

The sole basis for this belief came from something that happened in the summer of 1921, when they were at a hotel at Croton Falls, recovering from the birth of their daughter, and Mrs. Mull looked out of her window on a moonlit night and saw her husband kissing a redheaded woman whose husband was not due to arrive until Labour Day. Mr. Mull's story was that before he knew what she was up to, the redheaded woman pinned him against a pillar after dinner, while he was quietly smoking his pipe, and threw her arms around him and kissed him, missing his mouth, in her anxiety, by a good margin.

But Mrs. Mull would have none of that, and from that moment until the day he died Mr. Mull enjoyed the reputation with his wife of being a wild, philandering ladies' man.

It was her contention that the women of the great city of New York rode on the Third Avenue trolley for the sole purpose of corrupting her husband. There was a story, it is true, that on a spring day in 1925, a widow in a veil walked forward along the aisle and slipped her address on an embossed card into his hand while she was waiting for the car to stop at Seventy-ninth Street, but there were many stories in those days about trolley-drivers and locomotive engineers and people like that, not all of them worthy of belief.

To forestall any other widows or soft-eyed virgins or dissatisfied wives with similar cunning tricks, his wife took to waiting along the route at odd and unsuspected hours for his trolley to appear. Once or twice he saw her in time, standing there next to the elevated pillar, holding their little dark-haired daughter, Clarice, by the hand, and he merely passed her by. She would scream like a forsaken bride, shaking her fist after the trolley car rattling down the tracks towards the Bowery, with the taxi-drivers stopping their taxis to gawp at her in wonder, but naturally she couldn't denounce him to the company.

So she descended to guile and picked corners where there were sure to be at least eight or ten other passengers waiting, which, for his job's sake, he couldn't dare sail by. Even years after she had given up the practice, he'd tighten visibly when he approached Twenty-third Street or Thirty-fourth Street or the back entrance of Bloomingdale's.

When she climbed into the trolley, she'd nod icily to Mr. Byrnes, who was her husband's conductor most of the time, pay her fare, march up the aisle towards the head of the car, glaring at any other woman who happened to be sitting there. She'd never say a word to her husband. She'd just sit there, boring holes in the back of his head with her eyes, until he couldn't stand

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it any longer and he'd draw the leather curtain they had around the driver's seat to keep the reflection of the lights within the car from confusing him on the night run.

The night shifts were, of course, the worst. She'd sit up for him in the dark cold kitchen with a blanket wrapped round her, like a fisherman's wife during a storm waiting for the lighthouse-keeper to come knocking on the door with the bad news. And when he did come home she'd pretend to be making coffee and getting out the biscuits, but all the time she was sniffing him for perfume like a hound on fresh tracks, and her eyes would be going over him for lipstick and signs of disarray like a pirate over a bloodstained map.

He was a good-natured man and he made no complaint. He'd been married only once and he supposed that was what the institution was like.

He was content enough. He had his whisky on and off the route, and he played with Clarice and taught her *Who Is Sylvia?* He endured the reproaches of his wife as he endured the weather and traffic policemen, and in the end he took it as a sign of love—which indeed it was—and he would have been lonely and lost without it. Everything considered, they lived together for nearly thirty years in what would certainly pass for happiness these days.

He lived to see his only daughter married to a good man, by the name of Smalley, who had a dependable job as an insurance adjuster. At the wedding, he said to the groom, " Ah, at least in your trade they'll never tear the tracks out from under you."

Mr. Smalley was of a different breed from Mr. Mull, which was only to be expected since Mrs. Mull had spent a good part of her life warning her daughter not to marry a man like her father. Mr. Mull had heard many of these warnings in his time, and while he had not actively set the seal of his approval upon them, he had been seen to nod in quiet agreement with his wife's directives. He admired her intelligence vastly.

The only pleasure Mr. Smalley took outside his home was prevailing upon people who had broken their legs in industrial accidents, or who had lost their goods by fire, to settle for less than they had originally asked from the company. He had never seen the inside of a saloon and he lowered his eyes when he passed women in the street. Mr. Smalley was a good provider, and while he did not seem capable of presenting his wife with an heir, he insisted upon her having a maid come in three afternoons a week.

When Mr. Mull died, Mrs. Mull mourned him truly, keeping his photograph on the mantelpiece, and saying to visitors over a cup of tea, " Ah, nobody knows the life that man led me."

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She dreamed about him constantly through the years, conversing with him in her sleep in wifely tones, and walking over the next morning to her daughter's home to tell her about it.

"Your father visited me again last night," Mrs. Mull would say, "and we had a nice long talk about the time we went picnicking up the river to Newburgh and the steamer almost capsized in the rain."

Or, "We had a serious talk last night and he promised to drink only beer until the Sunday after Easter."

And sometimes Mrs. Mull would hurry over, with her eyes shining, to say, "He was in very good spirits last night—not affected by drink or anything like that, you understand, but jolly—and he sang *Flow Gently, Sweet Afton* and four verses of *They're Hangin' Danny Deever in the Mornin'*."

Clarice took the reports of these conversations calmly. She had loved her father and thought him by far the most interesting man she had ever known, and it seemed to her entirely natural that his memory died hard.

Her mother was a lonely old woman, living in one room, with very little to occupy her after an exhilarating lifetime of nagging an obstreperous and lovable man, and Clarice felt that these matter-of-fact nocturnal visits from the grave lightened her mother's solitude and gave point to her days.

But one morning the whole atmosphere changed. Her mother appeared early, white-lipped and angry. "He came again last night," she said, almost as soon as she walked through the door of Clarice's apartment.

"Did you have a nice visit?" Clarice asked, according to her usual formula.

"We did not," Mrs. Mull said. "We had a mortifying evening."

"Oh Mother," Clarice said, "is that nice?"

"I would like to see what you would have done," said Mrs. Mull, "in my place."

"You must be careful not to hurt him," Clarice said soothingly. "Remember, he's an old man."

"Hurt him!" Mrs. Mull snorted. "Try to hurt that man. He has the hide of an elephant."

"What happened?" Clarice asked.

"The bell rang," said Mrs. Mull, "and there he was, standing there, with that smirk on his face he always has when he knows he's doing something that will annoy me."

"Now, Mother," Clarice began, "you mustn't read into things . . ."

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" Read into things! " Mrs. Mull said. " Wait until you hear the story and then say read into things. Do you know what that man had the cold, icy courage to do last night? "

She paused and Clarice dutifully said, " What? "

" Finally," Mrs. Mull said, " he overstepped the bounds. I'm a tolerant woman and I've learnt to take the bad with the good, but even saints have their limits. And when I saw them standing there outside the door last night, I knew . . ."

" What? " Clarice asked, puzzled. " What do you mean, *them*? "

Mrs. Mull said tightly, " What I mean, exactly, is *them*. Your father and that redheaded woman in a crepe-de-Chine dress so tight you'd wonder how she could breathe the air or digest her food. And the child."

" What child? " Clarice asked faintly.

" A big lumpish boy," said Mrs. Mull, " growing out of his clothes, with the same smirk on his face. Put a moustache on him and he could go down to the depot any day of the week and take out a trolley and run the full length of Third Avenue and nobody would know the difference."

" Now, Mother," Clarice said. She had heard, of course, of the redheaded woman on the porch at Croton Falls in the summer of 1921, but this was the first intimation of issue. " I never heard of any child."

" Neither did I," Mrs. Mull said, " until last night. Oh, he was the most deceitful man who ever walked the streets of the city. But last night he tore away the veil. Standing there, as cool as you please, with that woman's hand on his arm, and that unmistakable child, saying, ' Bertha, I've brought some friends. Are there any refreshments in the house? ' "

" And what did you do then? " Clarice asked, humouring her mother, but curious also.

" Oh, I was polite," Mrs. Mull said. " I never held with making scenes before strangers, and your father knows that and depends upon it. I gave her a cold bow and I took the boy's cap and I ushered them in with all civility and I made them tea and set out half a crumb cake that I had in the cupboard. I sat there, putting in a yes or no from time to time while that woman talked about Croton Falls and how she found the summer weather a little sticky and how she suspected they used margarine in the kitchen for cooking, although they swore they used butter.

" I'll admit I didn't go out of my way to make them comfortable, and they cut their visit mercifully short. I took the opportunity of getting your father off to one side for a moment and I told him, in no uncertain terms, that that was the last I wanted

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to see of that woman and their child of sin. I said, clear and definite, so there would be no misunderstanding in the future, that if he expected to see me again, he would have to make his visits alone."

"What did Father say to that?"

"He didn't say anything," Mrs. Mull said. "Before he could open his mouth, she came into the hall and put her hand on his arm and said, 'Frederick, it's getting late, we're expected downtown,' and off they went together, after kindly thanking me for the tea, all unholy shameless three of them."

Clarice was a sensible girl and she said the right thing to restore order and harmony. "I don't think you have anything more to worry about now," she told her mother. "I'm sure he'll take the hint."

"He'd better," Mrs. Mull said fiercely, "or he'll find the door locked in his face."

For the next week or so, Mrs. Mull reported, all went well. Mr. Mull visited her three times, rather quiet and absent-minded but alone.

She herself had decided to be tolerant and keep her opinion to herself, and she had tactfully not mentioned the redheaded woman and the unmistakable boy.

But then the devil came up in him again, and on a Saturday night he rang the bell and there he was with the smirk on his lips and the redheaded woman on his arm, with every wrinkle of her corset showing as clear as light through her skintight dress, and of course that lump of a boy, with his father's Saturday-night expression built into his face.

"He stood there in the hallway," Mrs. Mull told Clarice on the following Monday morning, "grinning and enjoying his guilt, saying, 'We were just passing by and we thought maybe you'd like a little company!'"

Mrs. Mull had had to wait until Monday to tell Clarice, because Clarice had been in Providence for the weekend, visiting the family of Mr. Smalley.

The enforced delay had enabled Mrs. Mull to arrange the details eloquently in her mind, and she started her story even before she took off her hat in Clarice's living-room.

"I took one look at him," Mrs. Mull said, "and I let my eyes pass significantly over that woman and her criminal son, and it wasn't wasted on your father, you can be assured of that. But he brazened it out. 'Aren't you going to invite us in for a minute, Bertha?' he says, standing there between the two of them, like a prize bull at a fair. 'I warned you, Frederick,' I told him, polite

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but final. ' Now go away and never come up these stairs again.'

" ' Now, Bertha,' he began, in that wheedling, sugary tone he knows how to put on. But I cut him off quick.

" ' I told you to go away,' I said. ' I wash my hands of you. I have stood enough. Don't waste your time trying,' I said. ' This door is locked.' And I closed it in his face, not slamming it, because I wouldn't give that woman the pleasure of knowing I was angry, but sharp and definite. I heard regretful whispering on the other side for a minute or two, and then they shuffled off and I went to bed.

" He came back an hour later and he rang the bell and he called through the door, ' I'm alone now, Bertha, let me in,' but I made not a move and I said not a word. He rang the bell all the night long and whimpered outside the door, but my decision was made and I didn't let him know, even by a whisper, that I so much as heard a sound.

" And in the end, when the sun was coming up, he gave a last, despairing ring, and he called, ' I'm going, Bertha, it's good-bye for ever,' and even though my heart fell down inside me like a weight, I didn't answer him, because it's about time he was taught a lesson.

" And that," Mrs. Mull said, " is the end of your father."

Clarice started to tell her mother that she ought to give him one more chance, but she gave up when she saw the set of Mrs. Mull's jaw.

She made her mother a cup of tea and tried to calm her as best she could and watched her put on her hat, squarely on her head, like a soldier putting on his helmet before a battle, and descend the stairs, implacable and alone.

Clarice thought all day about her mother and about how the love she bore her husband could burn so fiercely for forty years that she could find the strength to turn him away from her door, even though he had been dead so long, because of a kiss on a porch in Croton Falls in 1921.

And when Mr. Smalley came home that night, Clarice looked at him coldly and knew, as he took off his shoes and sat down mildly and faithfully in an easy chair, putting on his glasses to read the evening newspaper, that he never could inspire such passion in any woman, and that ten days after he had been lowered into his grave she would not be able to remember even his most obnoxious mannerism.

" Ah," he said wearily, settling into his chair, " I've been busy today."

Clarice looked at him for a long, bitter moment. " Doing

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what?" she asked, "cheating the poor and doing sad souls that have been destroyed by fire out of their rightful damages?"

"Clarice!" Mr. Smalley said, looking up from his newspaper, frightened and surprised, and understanding mournfully that something had gone suddenly and permanently wrong.

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COLD BLOWS THE WIND

Never mind! If, like Cock Robin, you have somewhere to take shelter, tuck your head under your wing and blow out the answers to our 8 questions. If becalmed, you may turn, e-ventually, to page 143.

1. "*Welcome, wild North-easter!*" *Who made this unpopular statement?*
2. *Can you give the difference between a typhoon and a hurricane?*
3. *Windflower, windhover; what are the more usual names?*
4. *Can you give the location of that frustrating area, the Doldrums?*
5. *Who wrote: The Wind in the Willows; A High Wind in Jamaica; The Wind in the Sails?*
6. "*A tempestuous wind called Euroclydon.*" *What reverend gentleman was incommoded by this?*
7. *Quick! name five winds beginning with S.*
8. *Force* 12, "*That which no canvas could withstand.*" *Can you identify this reference?*

POETIC LICENCE

Elderly and famous men found Mary [Gladstone] a most attractive young woman. Ruskin and Tennyson were frequent visitors at Hawarden and both of them flirted with her more or less decorously. Ruskin's behaviour was only to be expected but Tennyson's admiration left Mary surprised and disconcerted. It was embarrassing to find the Poet Laureate stroking your nose and describing it as "*un petit nez retroussé* meaning all sorts of naughty things," or staring hard in your face to determine the colour of "those wonderful eyes." "I put all this down," Mary confided to her diary, "because I am unused to personal remarks and it is so *very* odd."

GEORGINA BATTISCOMBE, *Mrs. Gladstone*

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STAR SEEKER

" Planet Six ! " he shouted.
" Have you no surprises at all ? "

BY KEM BENNETT

LUIS PARNELL eased himself into the pilot's capsule of the scout ship and lay quite still with his arms outstretched and his body feeling, as usual on these occasions, as if it had been emptied from the chest downwards. To make things better he reminded himself that soon he would be alone again, free and remote from the *Seeker*, his mother ship, and her crew of Martian technicians. That was splendid. That was enough to make him want to sing. He had had enough of the Martian race, as he had also had enough of chemically purified air, redistilled water, drugs, instruments, machinery, boredom, inactivity, and imprisonment.

Jutta the Interpreter's voice sounded in his earphones: " They will land you on what appears to be a flat plain under a range of low hills, Luis. Fifty seconds to zero. Are you prepared? "

" Yes, Jutta, I am ready."

" Come back soon—and safe."

" I'm sure I shall." He paused for an instant and then, in a less casual voice, added, " Thank you, Jutta."

" I shall miss you," she said. " Seven, six, five, four, three, two, *one*! You're away, Luis. God be with you."

He knew that he was alone in space. Jutta was now the sole human being remaining in the *Seeker*. He felt sorry for her.

He waited, tensing his muscles, trying not to hold his breath. Seconds passed. Half a minute. Ah! It was starting! He could feel his body pressing forward against the straps of his harness and downward into the foam-rubber cushion that he lay on.

" Gently," he said aloud, thinking of the Martian hands that were controlling his flight from the instrument-room of the *Seeker*. " Gently, you knock-kneed, two-fingered, pop-eyed collection of perambulating intellects! "

Strain. He shut his eyes and clenched his teeth. The machinery that encompassed him was howling and he hated it. Without machinery, this would not be happening; he would not be lying in a needle-pointed coffin, gripped by the soggy, head-bursting, rib-crushing torture of violent deceleration.

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It worsened. Luis clenched his teeth harder and stopped even thinking. He waited. He existed for an eternity of ten minutes until the throb of the refrigerator pumps started. Then he was forced to think again. The pumps meant he was entering an atmosphere. Not long now. Not long, but on the other hand he was aware that the outside of the scout ship would now be glowing dully red and, as usual, the knowledge was terrifying

He felt, or fancied he felt, an increase in the temperature of the air about him and wondered how quick would be the process of incineration. Instantaneous? Seconds, moments, minutes? What were the pop-eyed little anthropoids in the *Seeker* up to? They must have miscalculated. Or the machinery was defective. Damn it! Damn all machinery, all spaceships, all science, progress, and curiosity! Damn the Martians, without whose knowledge he would not have been doing what he was doing now Damn the lunacy in himself that was fascinated and challenged by the danger and excitement of exploration. How many *more* times would he feel impelled to prove himself?

Relief. The pressure on his body was decreasing. He took a long, deep breath. Less and less it became. Oh, cool heaven! It was like not having toothache. It was like not having to run when one's breath is lost. It was gentle ecstasy and he wished it could go on for ever.

There came a light, swishing impact.

Luis knew he was down. This was the terminus. This was Planet Six of the Dagon system. It might turn out to be a hell or a heaven, but at least it was a sizable planet with a breathable atmosphere and a gravitational field roughly equal to that of Earth.

With happiness in him, he lay still and waited, letting his aching body and nerves recover from the strain of the landing. No unwary haste, no impetuosity. Not from Luis Parnell, oh no! After all, this was the fifty-fourth—no, the fifty-fifth time of asking. He was, as it were, a professional first-footer. He did what no Martian had the physique and few humans had the courage to do.

Ah, that was better. The knots in his nervous system were dissolving. He could actually feel his amour-propre reasserting itself. He smiled to himself in the dimness of the capsule and, for a moment, permitted himself to be insufferably proud. Luis the Valiant. Luis the Discoverer of Worlds. Luis the Star-Seeker. Olé, as his ancestors used to say in the bullring. Olé, Luis, olé!

Out went his finger to a button nearby, and the port in the side of his craft opened and canted downward to form a ramp Clear

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yellow light flooded the transparent capsule. He broke the seals and stood up. He took a tentative sniff at the atmosphere. Fresh. Fresh, clean air. As always, the technicians aboard the *Seeker* had made no mistake; the air on Planet Six was excellent. Well done, you little red creatures. Olé, the Martians!

He went to the open port. Ah! Planet Six was truly a green planet. Gratitude for its greenness flowed into Luis. Better than one of the red-and-yellow parched abominations on which a man had to clump from place to place in a pressure suit and lead boots, or labour like a coolie to lift a foot against a monstrous pull of gravity. Much better. And the air was soft and a pleasure to breathe. He breathed it and felt godlike.

Out onto the ramp. Away the greenness stretched, mile after mile after mile of it. Grass. Long, lush, green grass. Turning to look over the low scout ship in the other direction, Luis saw that he had indeed, as promised, been landed close to a range of hills. They, too, were green.

Silence. Complete, blank, impenetrable silence; a thick and lonely silence.

"Nice country for cows," he shouted out loud. The sound of his own voice was reassuring.

He walked down the ramp, feeling now a little disappointed. Grass was all very well. Very evocative of the more fertile parts of Earth. Nice, familiar, commonplace stuff. But one could have too much of a good thing. And the silence was oppressive. Did they not have winds in this world? Nor animals to eat this superabundance of fodder?

At the bottom of the ramp he put out a tentative foot—the greenness of the grass had made him think of marshes—but the ground was firm. He strode through the grass. To move, to walk, to use his muscles, all this was good. To see a mile, to feel a sun, to be free of enclosure by shining metal and plastic walls—this, too, was good. So good that he sang, *Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, life-is-so-good-today!* and then shouted crazily, "Olé! Up the Arsenal! Death to the Infidel! Vive le Sport! And what have you got to offer, Planet Six? Just grass? Can you do no better than that? How undistinguished of you. Surely you can find something better to show a visitor from far, far away. I am Luis the Star-Seeker and my time is valuable."

He thumped himself majestically on the chest. "Luis the Star-Seeker! Luis the Discoverer of Worlds! Come now, Planet Six, have you no surprises at all?"

There was no answer. He glanced suddenly over his shoulder. Then chuckled—to himself and at himself. No bogymen. No

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bug-eyed monsters. Nothing even so remarkable as a Martian.

He walked a little farther, enjoying the gentle warmth of Planet Six's sun, Dagon, on his face. Dagon was a mild and elderly sun. It seemed, furthermore, that Planet Six was a mild and elderly world. Grass. Millions and millions of square miles of it. Of course, he had so far seen very little of it, but an intuitive something told him that there would be little more to see. More hills. Mountains, possibly. Here and there a change of vegetation, perhaps. A great deal of ocean, for it was a watery planet. Life? Well, who knows, but it didn't look like it, did it?

Of all things, the grass was affectionate. It had a curious feel, clinging to the foot as one walked. In fact it caressed the foot with little, thin, sticky fingers. Most remarkable.

Luis stopped and looked down at the grass curiously. As he looked it seemed to grow or stretch, up and over the instep of his plastic boot. There was something animal about its groping growth, and he frowned slightly as he bent to pluck a handful. It was smooth to the touch, he noted, rubbery and full of sap, like one of the succulents found upon Earth.

Then the pain came.

It sliced into his hand. It tore at the flesh of his fingers like the red-hot claws of a cat out of deep hell. He screamed. Clutching his right wrist with his left hand, he crouched, whimpering, squeezing frantically in an attempt to numb the shuddering nerves of his fingers. Oh my God! "Oh my God!" He shouted the words aloud, again and again, while the sweat ran out of him, soaking his clothes and running down his forehead into his eyes.

Acid. Burning, fiery acid. The fingers and palm of his right hand were seared. Great blisters had risen on the skin and burst. The flesh was charred, brown, and weeping.

Back! Back to the ship, you fool! Wash the hand. Dress it. Stop the searing bite of the acid!

He tried to run. He nearly fell, then, because his legs started to move but his feet did not.

Incredulously, with sheer horror pressing in upon him like deep water pressing in upon a diver, Luis realized that the grass had tied him down. He was anchored. Growing over his shoes, it had bound him with a hundred thongs—to itself, to the ground, to a terrible, burning death.

He snatched at his knife with his left hand, oblivious of pain now. He stopped, holding the knife by the end of the handle lest his fingers should touch the dreadful greenness, and he slashed—and slashed—and slashed. His left foot came free.

Keep it moving!

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He marked time, like a one-legged veteran in a victory parade. One-two-three-four. The fourth time his foot touched the ground he thrust downwards and, at the same time, strained upwards with his right leg. No effect. The grass held its prey. One frond was weak, a hundred were strong.

How long, Luis wondered, would his plastic shoes resist the exudation of the grass? How long before his feet began to burn as if they had been thrust into a furnace?

Keep it moving! One-two-three-four! One-two-three-four!

He strained to think. How could he stoop to slash at the grass about his right foot, at the same time giving the filthy stuff no chance to cling to his left foot again?

There was a noise. Somewhere he heard an airy, rhythmical noise. He ignored it. One-two-three-four! Think, man! Can you afford to leave the foot down long enough to slash once? Or twice? Probably. But did he dare?

The noise was there again. It obtruded. He tried to take no notice, but it forced itself upon his attention. Beating? Beating wings! His head jerked up. Nothing. Or was there? Yes. Yes, behind him! Round went his head.

For the second time, Luis screamed. The bird was monstrous, twelve feet across the wing-span, a body the size of a grown man's. It was swooping down on him. And its claws were gaping wide—to seize, to hold, and to tear.

In a state of blind panic he stabbed. He stabbed upwards wildly, his arm swinging through a long arc. He missed. The bird's claws fastened upon the cloth of his overall. He stabbed again, desperately, and this time saw and felt the knife sink into a golden thorax. Now it was the bird that screamed.

Up it went, soaring. Then it faltered and down it came, blood staining the golden breast feathers. It brushed the grass and rose again. The rhythm of the wingbeats quickened, but their strength was gone. Down it came again. As its great body touched the grass it made a supreme effort to rise. It did rise, thirty feet into the air, but then it fell, like a plummet, and the noise of it hitting the ground was loud and sickening.

The dying bird did not struggle any more. It lay still, bowed its crested head, then raised it again. Luis looked into its yellow eyes and for a mad moment thought he saw pain and sorrow there.

He marked time, sweat running off him. One-two-three-four! Pull—stoop—slash! That was better. That was how to do it. One-two-three-four-pull-stoop-slash!

The bird's eyes were glazing. Already the grass covered the

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extremities of the wings. The beak was opening and shutting, opening and shutting.

One-two-three-four-pull-stoop-slash! He looked at the bird again. Dead? Not quite. Was that sorrow in the eyes? or compassion? He shuddered. How could it be? Impossible. Surely . . . surely, it could not have been trying *to help*?

One-two-three-four-pull-stoop-slash! The beak was not that of a predatory bird. One-two-three-four-pull. The claws had been claws, not talons. One-two-three-four-pull-stoop-slash-pull!

He was free! His foot came free. He ran. Stumbling, fumbling strides. Almost, he fell. Almost, he fell face downwards in the terrible grass. But not quite. Not quite.

He was back on the ramp. He was back in the ship. It was a jewel of shining, beautiful metal. It was a haven, brilliantly conceived by a Martian super-intelligence, and superbly built by the foremost Earthling engineers. He loved it. He fell on his knees and adored it, putting out his uninjured hand to stroke and caress the cool metal of the floor.

Presently he turned and looked back at the grass through the open port. The bird was dead, and the grass was busily, greedily growing over it.

Luis shuddered. It had been trying to help him. He knew it now. He felt it. It had possessed intelligence. He would never forget the pain and compassion in the tortured yellow eyes—never, never, never.

Even before he went to the medical chest to attend to his hand, Luis stood on the ramp of his ship, staring at the mound of growing grass that had been a bird, and prayed aloud for the creature's forgiveness.

He injected local anaesthetic into his hand and cleaned and dressed the burns. He shut the port. He ate a little food and made himself a hot drink and then lay down on the pilot's couch and slept.

The following morning he opened the port again. Nothing had changed. There were more clouds in the sky, but the sun was shining benevolently through the gaps. He looked at the endless grass with bitter loathing for several minutes, then shut the port.

Earlier he had switched over the controls of the machine from remote to local operation and now he started the machinery that drew back the shutters over the hardened-glass observation ports. He took off in a blaze of rocket-fire, knowing with sour delight that he would have scorched clean an area of the loathsome grass as he did so.

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By now it was pointless to attempt to establish radio contact with the *Seeker* because she would be too distant and his signals would be liable to bounce off the upper layers of Planet Six's atmosphere. He did not try. He would be back aboard her soon enough, for he felt no inclination to linger in this world of awful greenness. Only, before he returned, he wanted to know a little more about the great birds.

He set the scout ship to fly in widening circles and lay prone, with his face pressed close against an observation port. The automatic instruments in the ship were clicking and whirring, but he did not even bother to test that they were all properly functioning. He was in a vile mood, furious with himself for having so nearly died, bitterly disappointed with Planet Six, which could have been a Garden of Eden but was instead a green desert, and at the same time filled with disgust at the thought of returning to imprisonment in the *Seeker*.

His spiral course took him out over the sea. It was blue, calm, and limitless, and it made a welcome change after the endless grass. He crossed the range of hills, then another. Nothing but grass, grass, grass, and water.

Where did they live, these birds?

Luis found the answer just as he was about to give up the search and put into action the machinery that would fling his craft out of Planet Six's atmosphere. The answer was an island—not of land surrounded by water, but of vivid yellow trees like giant flowers surrounded by grass. It was on a hilltop, higher, possibly, than any other he had flown over. A flight of great birds rose wheeling from the flower trees as he passed overhead

Jutta the Interpreter half lay, half sat in her couch-seat in the instrument-room of the *Seeker*. She could feel an attack of the melancholy that afflicts human space-travellers coming over her and was trying to decide whether to fight it or let it come and then take refuge in sleep. It all depended upon how soon she would be needed.

Luis had been gone for three days now; he could return in an hour, a day, or a week. While he was away she was a mere passenger aboard the *Seeker* because her sole duty was to act as a telepath, relaying unspoken Martian thoughts to Earthlings dependent upon the spoken word for communication. This was the duty for which she had been trained since early childhood.

The instrument-room hummed. It was, like the busbar room of an electric power-station, alive with vibration. Normally, Jutta was too inured to notice, but now, with an attack of *le cafard des grands espaces* imminent, she heard and felt the power in

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the room. It made her nerves crawl. It made her thoughts twitch backwards and forwards, from one sadness to another, in a way that would soon become intolerable.

She pulled herself out of her seat and clumped metallically towards the door. The little, red, wrinkled Martian forms sitting in a row in front of their dials and radar screens took absolutely no notice of her. They had no organs of speech, nor of hearing. Furthermore, they were quite devoid of curiosity in so far as human emotions and activities were concerned.

Jutta walked down the long passageway towards her cabin with her head bent, hating the clumsy magnetic boots she was forced to wear, hating her unfeminine uniform overall, hating the *Seeker*, her job, and herself. Homesickness for Earth had increased until it had become a physical sensation—a pain and an emptiness. How soon would Luis return?

Once he was back they would start the return journey because they would then have reconnoitred the whole of the Dagon system. They had left settlements on Planets Three and Five to which expeditions needed to be sent without delay. To return to Earth it would take them seven months at least; more if they were to linger for some reason, or call in at one of the settlements en route . . .

Seven months!

In her cabin she took off her clothes and sprayed herself with an astringent lotion—less wasteful than water—which came from a jet set in the cabin bulkhead. She was twenty-eight years old, brown-skinned, fair-haired, and beautifully proportioned—as all Earthlings were, for that matter, in the year 2760. By now the scientists knew all that there was to know about the care of bodies; only the human personality still evaded their attempts to categorize and regulate.

Jutta crossed to her bunk, jumped into it with a gentle pressure of her bare toes on the floor, pulled herself down onto the mattress, and adjusted the padded framework that would prevent her weightless body floating out of the bunk should the *Seeker* change course or velocity. She would sleep for six hours, she decided. She closed her eyes.

When she woke, six hours later, the red light which indicated that she was needed in the instrument-room was glowing over the door. She got up and dressed, feeling guilty, and was back in the instrument-room five minutes later.

As soon as she entered, Martian thoughts flooded into her brain: *The scout ship has left the atmosphere of Planet Six. We have taken control. The scout ship will enter the landing-port in twelve minutes thirty seconds. Please be ready to receive it.*

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Jutta made her way back along the passage, past the Martian quarters, the cabins, the recreation-room, past the commissary, along a catwalk, between fuel tanks a hundred and thirty feet long by fifty in diameter, until she came to the great door of the air-lock leading to the landing-port. She waited.

Presently a green light glowed above the air-lock door. She pressed a button beside it and it opened. The scout ship lay in its cradle, and as she entered, its port was automatically opened. She went up the ramp. She worked the mechanism that broke the seals of the pilot's capsule and leaned forward to put her hand on the shoulder of the man lying inside. "Luis!" She saw his bandaged hand. "Luis! Are you all right?"

He took a long, shuddering breath. Raised his head. "Yes, Jutta, I'm all right. Help me out of this contraption."

They went arm-in-arm to his cabin where she helped him to undress and, when he had bathed and changed his clothes, renewed the dressing on his injured hand for him. Already it was almost healed; research had long ago taught doctors how to increase or retard the rate of growth of tissue.

Jutta asked no questions—because that was the convention—and what conversation they had was limited to civilities. Presently she left him to sleep; this, too, was part of the conventional procedure for scout pilots returning from an exploration.

While Luis slept, Martian technicians worked on the material he had brought back with him. Thousands of feet of film, samples of earth, air, and vegetation, cosmic-ray recordings, Geiger-counter recordings, sounds recorded on tapes, temperature and humidity readings, etcetera, etcetera.

Then, in the morning of the following day, Luis went to the instrument-room and took his place facing the senior officers of the Martian crew. Jutta sat beside him.

"From all indications, Planet Six is covered over nine-tenths of its land area by a single species of grasslike vegetation," Luis said in a flat voice.

Jutta focused her eyes upon a polished disk hung above the bald red head of Dag, the Martian captain. Luis's words entered her ears, became a thought in her brain, and flowed away from her by a process of concentration that had taken years to acquire—away from her and into the minds of Dag and his officers.

"As well as the grass, there are treelike vegetables bearing fruit, and a species of moss, but these exist only in isolated localities. The only other living organisms on the planet are birds—you will have seen the photographs. The larger, yellow-breasted specimens with crests are the males and the rust-coloured, uncrested ones are females . . ."

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The description went on. Luis told of finding several of the tree islands. He described his reception by the giant birds, their use of a language, and what he had been able to observe and deduce of their manner of life. They fed upon the fruit of the flower trees and upon the moss that grew beneath them.

He told how the grass was encroaching upon the islands, growing up the trunks of the trees, and literally eating them away with the solvent that its leaves exuded. He described how he had seen several of the trees on the perimeter of an island, undermined by the grass, fall to quick obliteration. As he did so, emotion entered his voice, against his will, and Jutta glanced at him curiously. The Martians were impervious to emotion.

When he had finished Dag spoke, through Jutta, for the first time. " Interesting. We have examined samples of the grass. We think the solvent can be synthesized. If so, it will be very useful. Is it your opinion that other life-forms have existed on the planet but have been obliterated by the grass? "

" I think it probable."

" Is it safe to assume that the trees, the moss, and the birds are about to be destroyed, also? "

" Unless they are given help to survive, yes."

" You have said the birds possess no material civilization. What, if any, was your estimation of their enlightenment? "

Luis stared up at the shining disk above Dag's head, thinking of the birds. By enlightenment, the Martian had meant knowledge; his mind admitted of no other kind. It was futile, therefore, to attempt to explain to Dag that the birds had seemed to him, Luis, to be wiser, kinder, more loving, and more lovable than any creature he had ever met on any other planet.

Dag would never hear their song. He might one day, through an Interpreter, comprehend their speech—but he would never understand, for, Luis knew, the things that the birds would have to say would be, to Dag, irrelevant nonsense.

How was he to answer, then? He shrugged. " Their knowledge of material things appeared to be minimal."

" This is the first occasion that a planet dominated by a single vegetable species has been observed," Dag remarked. " Is it not interesting? "

" Very," Luis said. " Will you please instruct the laboratory to prepare something that can be relied upon to destroy this grass? "

Jutta stirred in her chair. Her concentration momentarily faltered and she glanced again at Luis. He was different. She wondered why. Then she pulled herself together and gave Dag's question, " For what purpose? "

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" In order to protect the surviving bird colonies until an expedition can be organized."

" As you know, we lack the personnel to form a settlement," Dag answered. " Also, I cannot think it would be worthwhile. There would seem to be nothing there of value, apart from a situation of biological interest."

" I think it worth while."

" For the sake of the birds? "

" Yes."

" But since we lack human personnel . . ."

" I would go alone," Luis interrupted.

" That is against the rules."

" Yes."

" You have said that the birds' enlightenment is minimal."

" I think there are things of importance to be learnt from them."

" How did you arrive at this conclusion? I presume you had no time to learn the language."

Luis rubbed his face hard with his uninjured hand. He hated Dag—hated him at this moment with an illogical intensity of which he should have been ashamed but was not.

" I am sure they have nothing to teach the Martian race," he said bleakly, and enjoyed saying it although he knew that Dag would take it as an observation and not as an insult. " I am equally sure that Earthlings will learn much from the birds, if they can be saved. Therefore, if you, as captain of the *Seeker*, are unprepared to order the establishment of a one-man settlement, I shall exercise my Prerogative and order it myself."

" I am unprepared to organize such a settlement," Dag answered.

" Then I exercise the Prerogative." Luis felt Jutta's eyes upon him. He nodded irritably at the disk and she slowly turned her head to face it.

" In order to survive on Planet Six, my main need will be a weapon with which to control the grass," Luis continued. " Will you please issue the appropriate instructions to the laboratory? "

Dag said, " Of course."

Luis went to his cabin. He sat down and lit a cigarette made from the leaves of a Martian herb which was a gentle cerebral stimulant. He stared through the grey smoke into the middle distance, knowing that he had done well to exercise the Prerogative—which was a privilege given to all Earthlings who travelled in exploratory ships manned by Martian crews.

It had been given because the Earth World Government recognized the possibility that an occasion might arise when a Man could fly in the face of logic and still be right. Martians were

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dominated by logic; Man, still, in 2760, was not—not absolutely. Therefore the Prerogative was, in a way, the mark that pointed the difference between Earthling and Martian. For Luis, it was the mark that a Man should most proudly bear.

At the same time, he did not deceive himself that the thing he had done was not supremely dangerous. It was now up to him to record for the benefit of the Bureaucracy his reasons for exercising the Prerogative. Not easy. How to explain logically an illogical decision?

And if the Bureaucracy found his reasons insufficient, he would die. He would die because no expedition would be organized to relieve him on Planet Six. That was all. The World Government, after all, were not sentimentalists, and would not dream of spending millions of public money on the rescue of an individual whom they considered to have made a fool of himself.

He stubbed out his cigarette and reached forward to flick over the switch of the tape-recorder mounted above the radio set. At that moment there came a knock on his door.

"Come in." He turned, frowning, to face Jutta, standing on the threshold.

"I am sorry, Luis. I should not disturb you at this time."

"What can I do for you, Jutta?"

"I—" She hesitated. He smiled at her, discovering a greater affection than he had known before. "Why are you going back to Planet Six, Luis?" she asked quickly, knowing that she had no right.

He waited for a moment, looking at her. "I've been asking myself the same thing, Jutta. I have to record my reasons for exercising the Prerogative. If you're interested, come in and listen."

She came in. Luis lit a second cigarette.

"What will happen if they are not satisfied with your reasons?" Jutta asked after a long silence.

"I shall not be relieved."

"That will mean what?"

"That the grass will win."

"I think it is wrong of them to demand reasons. A man would not do what you are doing unless he had reason enough."

Luis looked at the tape-recorder. It was in motion. He smiled.

"Men go mad," he said. "One cannot expect the World Government to act as a lifeboat service for lunatics."

"But this is not lunacy."

"Dag thinks so."

"Dag is incapable of judging."

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" Yes," Luis said. " Have you used Peyote, Jutta? "

" Many times, during my training."

" Can you imagine how you would feel in the presence of beings whose very nearness had an effect upon you a hundred times as powerful as a dose of Peyote? Who possessed the ability to lift you right out of ordinariness, to make you percipient beyond the dreams of painters, to make you happy in a manner that you had not known since childhood—and all this without communication, because their language was incomprehensible to you? "

" That was how the birds affected you? "

" Yes." He hesitated. " I killed one of them in a moment of blind panic. I have to make recompense. But . . . but more than that I know that they must not be left to die. They are irreplaceable. They have no knowledge to speak of. What to eat, where to sleep, how to fly; all instinctive things. But in spite of their lack of knowledge—in fact *because* of their lack of knowledge—I believe them to be completely wise. They have lived on that Planet, without machinery, without civilization, without conflict or war or politics, for a million years, probably. Having seen them, having been near them, I simply cannot desert them so long as it is within my power to help. So I have used the Prerogative."

" You will be very lonely."

" I don't think so," Luis said. " They can sing, Jutta. They sang me a song of welcome. And when I left they sang the saddest song I have ever heard—because they were anguished to see me go and because they knew they were doomed. Besides, I am used to loneliness."

He smiled at her. " Don't forget I have been alone on fifty-five unexplored planets."

" You have greatly changed, Luis. That is no longer a boast."

" Have I? Isn't it? Yes, I am sure I have changed."

" May I come with you? "

He looked at her for a long time without speaking, then said, " Dag will not permit you to come. You're his only Interpreter."

" You are the only Earthling left on the *Seeker*," she reminded him. " Unless they call in at one of the settlements on the way back they will have no need of me. Anyway, I, too, have the Prerogative, haven't I? "

" Yes."

" Well? "

" You will be welcome, Jutta."

The scout ship lay on the grass thirty yards from the edge of a tree island. Luis and Jutta stood at the top of the ramp.

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The birds were swooping and circling about their heads.

"There they are, Jutta."

"They're beautiful."

"Of course."

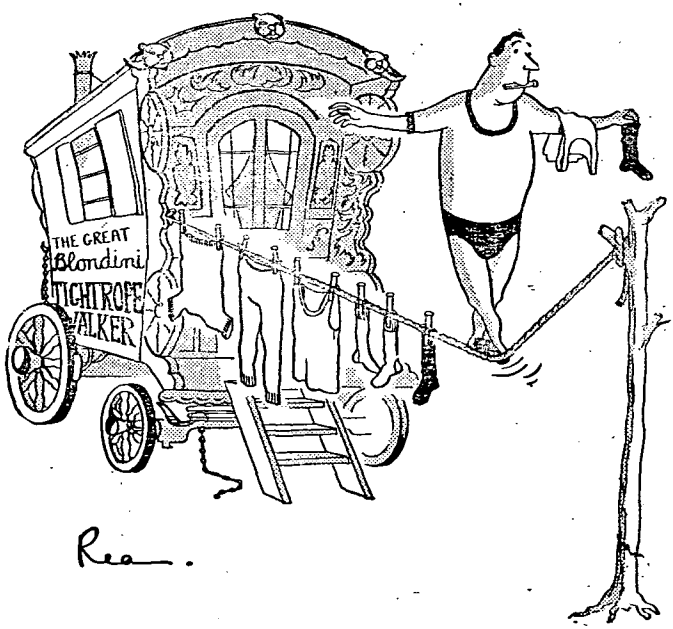
He went down the ramp, carrying a tank in a harness on his back and a spray nozzle in his right hand. At the bottom he stopped, and a fine spray of liquid emerged from the nozzle.

It seemed that the grass recoiled as the liquid touched it. The green fronds yellowed and drooped and died. Luis looked down at the horror he had killed. "God bless the Martians," he said quietly. He turned. Jutta was watching him.

She looked beautiful, excited and happy. He loved her suddenly and shouted at her triumphantly, "Come on, Jutta! Come and meet them. It's quite safe to walk through the grass so long as you keep moving and lift your feet high."

She came fearlessly down the ramp and they went, arm-in-arm, to the tree island.

The birds came to join them on the moss beneath the flower trees. They bowed three times, gravely, comically, in welcome. And then they began to sing.



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CROSSROADS

Another second—two—three
and they would be over the frontier

BY JOHN KRUSE

JIM hauled the big old Albion tar truck round into the yard and ran her in under the metal sheeting. He switched off, jumped down, and walked round to the back, putting on his shirt. The motor kept on kicking. It kicked over a dozen times before finally it died with a metallic sound.

"Lord, is hot!" the boy José said, coming from the other side. "Mucho, mucho calor!" He was shrugging into a black skin of tar that had once been a shirt. The legs of his trousers were twin tubes of tar, his boots black and glutinous. Where his goggles had been was the only part of him that was white.

Jim mopped his face with a rag and squinted away across the rooftops of Tangier to where the bay lay, a sickle in the heat. The water looked cool. His face was burning. The boy's face would be worse, with the tar hardening so that he would have to scrape half his skin away to get it off, and would not be able to shave without tears coming to his eyes or sleep without dreaming he was on fire. Operating the taps in a fine mist of scalding tar was the hard way to earn a crust.

"Come on and get cleaned up," Jim said.

They walked over to the petrol pump, filled a tin, and washed their hands and arms in it.

"Back quick today, amigos," the Spanish foreman called from the office door. He was leaning out of his bunk.

"Yeah," Jim called back. "We tarred down as far as the frontier. The ganger gave us an early day so we can start in tarring the Moroccan side fresh in the morning."

The foreman grunted and drew back into his bunk.

Jim glanced up under his brows at the boy. The boy's mouth twisted, but it hurt him too much to grin. They finished cleaning up and went out of the gate past the notice that read: SEBASTIAN IBANEZ, HAULAGE CONTRACTOR, down the long winding street into the town.

They walked slowly in the heat, swinging their empty lunch bags, the boy with his legs apart because of his tarry trousers.

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He was dark and thin. "What you make from this new business of tarring across the frontera?"

Jim had stopped to light a cigarette. He was down to two a day now, one after work and one after supper. He grunted.

The boy went on, "I think maybe I run a little gold in the truck just to make it worth our while, huh?"

Jim glanced at him sideways. "You try it. I'll break your neck."

"Aw, now, hombre—just a little million or two. Think of the pesetas. Especially it would be good for you right now."

"Shut up."

"O.K., so you don't need the pesetas. I will keep them all."

"Nuts."

The boy cocked an eyebrow at him and grinned; winced. He looked around. "This is where I go. So long, hombre. I go fix up about the gold." He fanned an open palm across the peak of his cap and turned down an alley towards the Spanish quarter.

Jim watched him go—a blackened, jaunty figure. José was kidding. He was a good boy. Plenty of iron. You needed iron, Jim thought, turning towards the bazaar. Just about all the iron there was.

He went down a side street past the weaving-shops, where kids of five and six were working, and into a smothered alley heavy with the reek of cooking oil. He tipped a latch and entered a tight little yard where washing hung very white above the chicken coops. He started up the flight of steps at the back of the yard; then he remembered. He stopped and took the cigarette from his mouth; gouged out the tip with his thumbnail. He inspected the blackened butt for a second; then he hurled it on the step and stamped on it. With his lips a hard line, he went up the remaining steps.

Lines of washing dabbed his face clammily as he went through the door. The room was filled with steam. Margaret was on her knees beside a tub, scrubbing clothes against a board.

"Hullo."

She looked up, startled. "Hullo, Jim." Her eyes widened. She stopped scrubbing.

"Relax," Jim said. "I've got an early day."

She let go her breath. She didn't smile.

He looked down at her flushed face, at the two red spots burning on her cheeks; her breathing came short and heavy. There was a pile of strangled clothes on one side of her and a big heap of soiled laundry on the other. He had taken a tight grip on himself as he came in the door, and now his face showed

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nothing as he stared at the mountain of washing. Neighbours' washing. Strangers' washing. He looked at her fingers clawing at the bladders of air; then his eyes glanced towards a kettle which was boiling in a corner of the room. "Can I use that?"

She followed his eyes. "Yes, Jim, if you get me some more."

He snatched up the empty bucket and twisted towards the door.

"Not if you're tired," she added.

He did not reply. He went out of the door and almost ran down the steps. He filled the bucket at the public pump and carried it back up to the room. Margaret was scrubbing with a leaden movement when he came back. She watched his feet across the floor, but didn't look up. Her shoulders dragged back and forward.

"Did you have a very hot day, dear?"

"Yes."

"It must have been bad for José."

"Yeah."

"Poor José." It was a whisper.

Jim could not bear to look at her dragging shoulders. He washed in silence.

"I'll get you something to eat, Jim." She had struggled to her feet and moved over to the oil stove. There was a wide panel let into the front of her dress. She had let in a fresh panel every two months. This was the third panel and it was very wide and of a different shade to the dress.

He stared at her shamefacedly. "How can you? No, I don't want anything."

"It's no trouble. If you're hungry you must be fed."

"I tell you I don't want anything. I'm not hungry. I don't have to eat if I'm not hungry, do I?"

"I didn't give you much lunch."

"I had plenty. Too much." He was drying himself. The muscles balled and lengthened in his arms. He looked at her suddenly. She was standing with her eyes shut. "What did you have?"

"I had enough, Jim."

"I bet. What did you have?"

"Oh, I had some bread and some chocolate. Very Spanish." She laughed.

He flung the towel away from him and went out onto the step. He felt her eyes on his back. He escaped into the yard.

He stood in the yard amongst the motionless washing and looked fiercely up at the sky. It had turned a hot yellow. It looked empty. After a while he sat down on the steps.

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Children were screaming and laughing among the houses.

She had had a good job, nursing the Rexel children. A nice clean steady job—and now this. He had certainly messed up her life. She had had white hands and neat clothes, and the Rexels had thought enough of her to bring her with them all the way from New York just to take the children for walks and put them to bed. That was last summer. And now—this.

Why, he asked himself, why had it happened to her? What had she ever done? She had taken a walk in the bazaar and hadn't run away when a fresh seaman had spoken to her. That was about all she had done. The seaman had done the rest. He had been the seaman.

His mind ranged back over the past eight months with a sort of savage masochism.

His ship, the *Victor Johnson*, had been laid up in the docks with a broken shaft, and in the weeks that followed their meeting they had had plenty of time to get to know each other. Too much time. They had fallen in love. When the *Victor Johnson* finally pulled out, he had jumped ship. Margaret had jumped ship too and the Rexels had gone home without her. The pair of them had pooled their money and got married; rented a small flat in the New Town.

Tangier had looked kind of promising then, with its big construction programme and everything; and he had set out to get a job. It was then that his luck started to fail. "Sure, you're a good man," they told him, "but what can you *do*?" He could stoke, he could weld, he could drive a truck. But when he had told them that, they had shaken their heads. Native labour took care of those things in Tangier. What they wanted was executives.

Everywhere it was the same. Why should they pay a white man to do a job a native would do cheaper? When Margaret had tried to get a situation as a nursemaid, she had met with the same thing.

In two weeks their money had drained away. They had moved from the New Town to the Old and Jim had gone after any job he could get—native or otherwise. He had wound up with Sebastian Ibañez. Ibañez employed Spanish labour at native rates and he was having trouble getting the men.

Jim had taken the job temporarily, intending to pull out of it as soon as he got the chance. And then one day Margaret had told him she was pregnant. It had shattered everything. From then on he couldn't afford to take chances. He had had to hang on to the job with everything he'd got, cut down on expenses. But still they couldn't save. Finally, Margaret had had to take

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in washing so that they should have something put by for when the baby came.

It hadn't drawn them together. Oddly enough, it had driven them apart. He couldn't afford to take a gamble on a new job. And he liked to make his own decisions. He hated taking orders and now he had to—silent orders from a thing unborn. He loved her but he didn't want the baby. How could he when there was no money? It was between them always

Malaga had been on to him yesterday. Pestering. And the day before. But that was a sucker's racket. Once you got into the hands of those people you never got out. He had told Margaret. She said she would kill herself. She wouldn't do that, he knew. But it wasn't his line of country anyway.

He sat there morosely until it got dark. Then, with a sigh, he went back inside and they had supper. After supper he washed up the things and stretched out on the bed. Margaret went on with her washing.

He opened the book on quantity surveying that he was studying. He had had some practical experience. It was theory he was weak on. He had read several books on it already and was beginning to get a grip on the subject.

He tried to concentrate, but the hard short sounds of Margaret's breath kept breaking in on him. The washboard beat out a kind of rhythm. He tried to ignore it, but it was as if the washboard was winding him up, tighter and tighter. If she didn't stop soon he would go crazy. But it didn't stop. It went on and on; for about an hour it went on. Then it stopped. It stopped suddenly with a clatter. Jim swung bolt upright on the edge of the bed. Margaret was sitting back on her heels, wiping her knuckles across her forehead. Her eyes were shut, her lips white.

Jim moved swiftly, caught her by the wrists. He pulled her to her feet. "You've got to stop. Lay off! Do you want to kill yourself? Are you crazy?" He drew her over to the bed, made her lie down. "This stuff. This damn stuff!" He kicked the laundry pile

"It's got to be done, Jim."

"Like hell it has." He dragged the tub to the door and kicked it over onto the step.

"Jim!"

"Tell them to do their own bloody work!" He seized an armful of laundry and heaved it out into the yard. He turned towards the bed. "You're through with this, d'you hear? It's finished. You're not doing any more."

"But—"

"No buts. Get some rest. If you try to get that stuff up

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again I—I—don't know what I'll do, but I'm through sitting around and watching you kill yourself. Money isn't everything —there isn't enough of it in the world to make it right for a fellow to sit and watch you kill yourself. Get some sleep. I'm going out. I've got to think."

He stepped out over the tub and splashed down the steps. Out in the alley he stared about him, turned towards the centre of the Old Town. He walked fast, barging into people. In the rue Siaghias the shops were lit. People were coming and going against the lighted shop fronts. Everywhere there was noise. Tobacco smoke writhed on the still air; donkeys rammed past. "Kikh!" the vendors called, guiding their trays through the crowds. Jim shoved his way down the hill. He didn't know where he was going yet. His mouth was bitter, his eyes fixed.

Ahead of him he saw the Petit Socco. He realized then where he was going. He stopped by one of the shops and passed his tongue across his lips. His throat felt dry suddenly.

People were sitting drinking outside the Hotel Fuentes and the Café Central. The Café Español opposite was packed. The hum of voices across the narrow foot-passage was like the hum of bees.

Jim pushed himself away from the shop as though forcing his body to act against its will. He moved down into the Socco.

Malaga was standing in the centre of the street with a notebook and pencil in his hand. One of his runners hovered nearby. He worked like a bookmaker—Malaga—always openly, more often than not in the middle of the street. You could do that in Tangier Jim brushed him with his elbow as he passed, and walked on without looking back. He turned up Street Eleven and waited in a darkened doorway.

A minute elapsed. A figure came strolling casually along the alley, smoking a cigarette. He came up close to Jim and peered at him from under the brim of his hat. "So you change your mind?" The voice was amused.

"Yes."

"For why?"

"That's my business."

"It could be mine. So you cross tomorrow?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

The Spaniard laughed softly. "You leave it late, amigo."

"Can you have it ready?"

"Maybe yes, maybe no. How you want it?"

"Tins if possible—small tins, capable of withstanding a pressure of ten kilos to the square centimetre. Heatproofed, waterproofed, and no longer than your hand."

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The Spaniard chuckled. He wrote something in the darkness in his notebook. "Anything more?"

"Yes. I want something in advance."

"Pesetas?" Malaga clicked his tongue. "On what seguridád?"

"Do you think I'd be doing this if I had security?"

"No, amigo. Nor you, nor anyone. That is for why I do not pay my operarios before they work."

Jim drew in his jaw. "O.K. The deal's off." He turned away.

"Not so fast, amigo! I say I do not pay in advance. But sometimes I make a little loan. To my amigos, entiende?"

"What's the catch?"

"Ten per cent. By the week."

Jim said through his teeth, "I'll buy a thousand."

Malaga made a movement with his first two fingers, and a bill, folded into a spill, appeared under Jim's nose. "See you mañana. Same place, same time. Bring everything."

Jim snatched at the bill and crushed it into his pocket. "Where do I pick up the stuff?"

"It will come to you. Hasta la vista." Malaga turned and walked swiftly and silently away.

Jim stared after him for a moment. The next moment he swung round and was heading through the backstreets for home.

He was awakened the next morning by the muffled cries of the cockerel in the hen-coop below. He slid out of bed carefully. Margaret's breathing came to him deep and steady. He dressed silently in the faint luminosity from the open door.

Margaret had slept all the time. She had been dead to the world when he came in. The washing was still in the yard where he had thrown it. He looked at her dark shape in the bed with a sudden feeling of loneliness. He was alone in this thing. She was like his conscience, sleeping there. He was careful not to wake her.

He took the thousand-peseta bill from his pocket and stuck it in the small-change pot on the dresser. With money in the house she would be less likely to try and work. He took his empty lunch bag from its hook. It would be useful for carrying the tins. Lastly he put on his boots.

He made his way out into the dawn twilight, his breath white before his face. A few cowled figures padded past him on their way to work. There was movement in the metal shops, the sound of forges being lit.

The electric light was burning in the office at the haulage yard.

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José was in there with the foreman and one of the other tanker crews. They were warming themselves against the stove.

" Hola, Jim! Qué tal? " José called

" Let's go," Jim said gruffly. He started the truck and backed it round against the pump. The foreman checked their petrol tank. In a few minutes they were away, with their lights splashing the greyness of the narrow lanes.

" Another day, hombre," José shouted above the sound of the engine.

" I guess so, hombre."

That was all. They said the same thing every morning. It made contact between them somehow. They drove the rest of the way to the tar point in silence.

They were first into the big cinder yard with its coal stacks and railway sidings. José signalled him back into the loading-bay. Then he climbed up on top and knocked the filler cap off, lowered the heavy tar pipe into the aperture. While they were filling Jim sat in the cab tensely, watching the dawn blast a red hole in the sky. In twenty minutes they had loaded a thousand gallons of tar. Checking their weight on the weighbridge took another five minutes.

Then they were away, with the sun in their eyes and the road shining like a river ahead of them, grinding up between the dwindling white houses onto the wooded Charf plateau and across the plateau in the full glare of the morning.

The truck was a conversion job—prewar chassis, postwar tank —and a thousand gallons was a big pull for the engine. She crawled up the hills like a tortoise with the bellyache, took the down sweeps jerkily with the tar punching her forward in spurts as it swam about inside. They strained and wallowed across the scrubby hill country making poor time, the engine roasting their legs through the inside hood.

It was a quarter past eight when they reached the frontier. The barrier was down. An official waved them in to the side against the whitewashed customs house. Jim braked and called across out of the window, " Obra! Roadwork! "

A face like a worm-eaten mahogany carving poked in through the cab window and lisped a foul cloud of pipe smoke.

" Relax, amigos. It is all fixed." It was the road-gang foreman. " We begin at the barrier. Pull ahead slowly."

So they had organization; that might help, Jim thought, letting in the clutch. They crawled forward with the foreman riding on the step. The barrier swung up. They passed through. Jim pulled over to the working side of the road—the left—and stopped. They got out and stretched their legs.

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Jim looked about him with an effort at casualness. They were in the neutral strip. A hundred yards ahead of them was a second barrier. That would be the Spanish Morocco side. Somewhere there in the tortured country beyond, someone would pass him the stuff. He glanced back at the Tangier customs men. They were the boys he would have to beat. They were lounging in the shade now, not even glancing in his direction. But how would they act when he drove back?

"How far are we going?" he asked the foreman in Spanish.

"Far as we can."

"One strip?"

"One strip."

Jim turned to José. "Start the compressor."

José wound a piece of cord around the flywheel of the two-stroke behind the cab and jerked it to life. He adjusted its throttle to a steady clatter; then rolled down his sleeves, started putting on his gauntlets and goggles. Jim strolled round the back to watch the pressure gauge. When the air pressure inside the tank registered forty to the square inch, Jim signalled the foreman. The foreman waved his stick. "Vamos!" he shouted.

Jim swung up into the cab "O.K.?" he called back to José on the spray bar.

"O.K.!"

"Let her rip!" He let in the clutch. There was a hiss followed by a wet smack as the tar hit the road. He adjusted his speed to five and a half kilometres per hour on the slow-running speedo and hung out of the window to watch his nearside front wheel. He set it at nine inches from the kerb and held it that way.

The first "rip" was always the longest, as all three ballast trucks were full and could follow the tanker nonstop. They backed along behind him in turn, tipping a fine carpet of ballast onto the fresh tar through their regulators.

Out of the tail of his eye Jim saw the second barrier lift. Another few seconds and they were across the frontier. Morocco! There were the customs houses, with the officials standing well back out of the spray; but he was too busy watching his distance to give them more than a glance The spray bar was fourteen inches wider than his front axle. An error of more than three inches meant splashing the kerb. Then they were on a bend and he was taking it with a delayed turn so as to bring the back round neatly against the verge.

The foreman blew his whistle. José shut off the taps. Jim drove on twenty yards and stopped. The first rip was finished.

The two of them flopped out onto the grass and watched the ballast truck turn and drive off towards the ballast pit.

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José pushed up his goggles. " So this is los Marruecos. You have your gold with you, hombre? "

" Not yet," Jim said. " I'm picking it up on the way back."

José grinned. A car passed them. Jim sat up and peered at it. It went on down the road. He looked around. There was nobody in sight but the foreman, who was testing the wet tar with his stick. He settled back uneasily.

The ballast pit was several miles up the road and the trucks took some time to reload. It was twenty minutes before the first one reappeared. Jim shook José awake and they got the truck started again; did another short rip. After that it was all short rips and long rests with the sun growing hotter and the country more arid and mountainous.

Few people passed them on the road; half a dozen American cars, a donkey caravan, a company of Goum soldiers. No one stopped near them or spoke to them. The lunch break arrived. The tanker was already more than half empty. They were close to the ballast pit now and the rips were speeding up. At this rate they would be empty before half the afternoon was out. Once empty they'd have to start back.

Jim was restless. He left the others and strolled on up the road. A van passed him. He stared after it; but it didn't slow down. He walked on as far as he dared. He saw no one else. He turned back, puzzled.

When the break was over they started up again and began another rip. They had gone a short distance when a bunch of Moroccan women in cartwheel hats came around the bend. They were carrying charcoal on their backs. When they saw the tar truck they stopped at the side of the road to stare. Jim eased the truck up past them, watching the front wheel. They were standing on the edge of the verge. He shouted to them to move back. Suddenly something lumped past his head and hit the engine cover with a crash. A moment later there was a second crash. Jim snatched a glance behind him.

Two canisters lay in the bottom of the truck.

He looked in the driving-mirror. José was out of sight behind the tank. No one had seen. He completed the rip with his heart thudding against his ribs. When the foreman blew his whistle he stopped the truck and pushed the canisters into the tool bag.

He waited until José had gone over to speak to the foreman; then reopened the tool bag and twisted a length of thick wire around the neck of each canister. He bent the free end of each piece of wire into a hook; put the lot back in the bag.

José was the problem, he thought. Somehow he had to stow the canisters without the boy seeing him.

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When they had completed another rip, Jim climbed out of the cab and quickly unscrewed the collar that secured the air hose to the compressor. The compressed air in the tank began to escape back through the joint. He snapped a look round, but the clatter of the two-stroke drowned the steady rush of air.

A few moments later José came hurrying round from behind. " Hombre! The pressure is going! "

Jim was leaning against the side of the truck. " The hell it is! You check the other side—I'll check this."

He quickly fitted the collar back and tightened it. A moment later the two of them met round the back.

" O.K. my side," Jim said.

" O.K. mine."

" Blow out what's left of the air in the tank. I'm going to take the top off. Maybe the packing round the filler is giving out! "

José nodded. He opened the air tap. Jim reached in the cab and got out the tool bag. He clambered up the ladder onto the tank and waited for the rush of air to cease. When it had stopped he tapped the cap loose with a hammer.

" You want me to help? " José called up.

" No, I can manage."

Jim got the cap off. A hot whoof of tar fumes hit him in the face. He fumbled the tool bag open and lowered the canisters hurriedly inside the tank, burying their hooks in the packing round the aperture.

He glanced over his shoulder. José was coming up the ladder.

Jim stood up suddenly. He teetered, apparently off balance, and fell heavily on his side. His feet caught José in the chest and knocked him sprawling off the ladder. Jim shot him a look of alarm. " Sorry, boy! "

José scowled up at him from the verge. " Tonto! What the hell you do that for? "

" Sorry, hombre, I slipped." Jim snapped the cap on quickly and tapped it round tight so that it gripped the hooks against the packing. " All fixed now. The cap was loose."

He slid down and helped José to his feet; apologized again. " Shut off the air tap and let's see if she builds up pressure again."

José gave him a peculiar look and did as he was told.

By four o'clock the tanker had emptied itself. Jim turned her round and waited for José to get in. " Are you going to see us through the check-point? " he shouted to the foreman.

" No, amigo. It is fixed. They will just check you over and let you through."

Put that way, it sounded easy, Jim thought. He drove back

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down towards the frontier. He had a feeling inside him as if someone was putting a tourniquet on his heart.

Two officials stopped them in front of the first barrier. They glanced in the cab perfunctorily and waved them on. They drove across the neutral strip in silence. At the Tangier end they were told to pull in to the space opposite the customs house. Jim parked and climbed out. "Obra," he said to the four customs men who came over.

"We know."

One of the men climbed up into the cab and looked it over. He got down again. The others were looking under the frame.

They shone a torch down the petrol filler, lifted the spray apron gingerly with a stick. They looked behind the batteries and under the two-stroke housing. "How do you open the tank?" the senior official asked.

"The tank? Why, at the top."

"Open it."

"Are you crazy? The tank's full of compressed air. If I open the top she'll blow my head off."

José stared at him.

"Can't you let the air out?" the official asked. "Isn't there a tap?"

Jim licked his lips. "Yes, there's a tap. At the back. But I warn you, if I let her blow off she'll smother your nice clean car park in tar. Make one hell of a mess."

José made a sound. Jim scowled him to silence.

"Oh!" The official scraped his chin with his fingernail. He was silent for a moment. Then, without another word, he turned his back on them and walked away.

Jim turned to the others. "Is it all right?"

They shrugged at each other. "Sí, you can go."

The two of them piled back into the cab. Jim headed the tanker up into the Tangier road, fighting to hide his elation.

José spluttered, "What for you say she is full of air? When we finish I blow her out. You see me blow her out."

"Use your head," Jim said. "Don't you want to get home? If I'd told them we could take the top off they'd have had us messing about another half-hour."

"It take one minute to take off the cap."

"One minute, half an hour—what's the difference? We're headed for home, ain't we?"

José looked at him. He didn't say anything. They drove on for a while in silence. Suddenly José said, "Hombre, what have you there in the back?"

Jim held tight on the wheel. "What d'you mean?"

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" You bring something across. I understand now why you kick me like that."

" You do, huh? Well, you understand wrong."

" No, hombre." The boy regarded him levelly for a moment. Suddenly he burst out laughing. He slapped Jim on the back. " En verdad, you old bandido! For why you don't tell José you are bringing something? What is it you have there—gold? "

" You're crazy."

" Not so crazy, hombre. Por que tan misterioso? It is a good joke. Old Jim a bandido! I will help you unload and you will give me a very small share of the pesetas. It will be good fun."

" You're nuts. There's nothing there, I tell you."

The grin died on José's lips. " So. That is how the wind blows. You don't wish to share the pesetas, huh? "

" Keep out of it! " Jim snapped. " This is bad stuff, José. The money's bad—rotten—it stinks. Just keep out of it and don't ask any questions."

" No money is bad, hombre—money's money. Men are bad —when they will not share it with their amigos."

" Listen," Jim said. " You're a nice kid. You've got a mother and a sick sister who are living on your pay. You need money for them. Do you think I wouldn't help you out if I could? "

" Then we share it? "

" No."

" But I don't give a damn—"

" No! No, I tell you! "

José turned and stared at him, his eyes wide. Jim didn't say anything. He stamped the accelerator to the floor. The big truck gathered speed; screeched round a bend, narrowly missing an oncoming car. He kept his foot down grimly. When he glanced again at José, the boy was looking out of the window. He had to put it right between them somehow. " Don't you see? " he blurted out. " It's heroin. I'm running heroin."

The boy looked round towards him slowly; then away again. His voice fell flatly on the roar of the engine. " So what? "

Jim compressed his lips. He didn't try to explain. He couldn't explain it to himself. He just knew it was wrong. He had known all along that it was wrong, and he wasn't going to have the boy mixed up in it

When he reached the Petit Socco the sun had pulled back and out of it, leaving a pocket of mellow shade in which people of many races were gathered for the first drink of the evening. He stepped up to the tobacconist and asked for a packet of cigarettes. He glanced around

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Malaga was there, talking to some men. His dark eyes were busy beneath the brim of his hat. They rested on Jim for a fraction of a second. No sign of recognition showed on his face. Jim hesitated. He walked across to the Hotel Fuentes and sat down at one of the outside tables. He placed his bulging lunch bag between his feet and ordered coffee.

He had been there for maybe ten minutes when someone sat down beside him. "I said for you to come later, amigo."

"I know. I couldn't wait. This stuff is burning a hole in my bag. If I take it home my wife will see it. I had to take it somewhere."

"I have no interest in your domestic problems. If you are to be one of my operarios you must follow my instructions. Only the first time can such a thing happen. You have any trouble?"

"No."

"No?" Malaga looked surprised. "Just lately the customs make much heat down there on the frontier. That is good." He pursed his lips thoughtfully. "Very good. The tins—were they strong enough?"

"Yes."

"Let me see."

"For heaven's sake—not here!"

"Come on. It does not matter."

Jim opened the bag between his knees, showed Malaga the canisters. Malaga pulled one out and set it on the table.

"For heaven's sake!"

The Spaniard picked up a knife and forced up the cap. He smiled at Jim thinly and turned the canister upside-down. "See, amigo. Sawdust."

Jim stared at the little heap on the table blankly.

"Amigo, do you believe I trust you first time with a consignment worth hundreds of thousands of pesetas? No. First I must be sure. My operarios are my soldiers. When you teach a soldier to shoot, you do not give him real munición to learn with. You give him—how you say—duds."

Jim's body jerked forward. He gripped his knees. "You're lying! It's a trick. What's in the other canister?"

Malaga raised his brows. He looked around. "Antonio!"

The waiter came up. "Señor?"

"Do you want some sawdust for the floor?"

The waiter grinned. "Sí, señor."

Malaga opened the second can and emptied both their contents onto the wooden platform where they were sitting.

"Satisfied, amigo?"

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Jim fought to get a grip on himself. "But—but what about the money?"

"Next time, amigo. When you bring the real stuff."

Jim stood up. His knees were shaking. He blinked down at Malaga dazedly. Suddenly he balled his fist and hit the Spaniard hard in the mouth.

Malaga's feet kicked the table. He crashed over backwards into the laps of the people sitting behind.

Without giving him a second glance Jim stepped down off the platform and strode away. He pushed his way home through the alleys. The muscles of his neck were distended. A hot flush burnt up the sides of his face. He didn't dare trust himself to think. He clawed open the latch into his yard; started up the steps.

He was halfway up when a woman's voice called him breathlessly. "Monsieur!" It was the seamstress from downstairs. She waddled out into the yard with her hands out in front of her like buffers. "Monsieur, your wife!"

Jim twisted round. "What about my wife?"

"She—oh, monsieur—they take her to the 'ospital."

"What?" Jim came back down the steps with a rush. He gripped the woman by the shoulders. "What happened to her—why? Why?"

"The baby—come this morning. Premature. They take her to the 'Merican 'ospital."

Jim stared at her. He let go of her and ran out of the yard.

Traffic was not allowed down into the Old City. He had to run up through the bazaar to the big open market place before he could get a taxi. In less than ten minutes he was at the hospital. He had to wait at the desk while the man phoned up to the ward. Yes, he could go up.

At the top of the stairs an American nurse met him—very cool and self-possessed. She looked at his grimy clothes curiously

"Is she all right, Nurse? How is she?"

"She's doing as well as can be expected. She's very weak. You must not excite her."

"No, no. Did she—is the—baby—all right?"

"The baby died. I'm sorry. Come this way."

There was a moment of sudden almost uncontrollable sickness; then he was following her, his mind in a turmoil, into a small ward. Jim tried to swallow back his nausea, control himself. He stood by the bed, twisting his cap.

"Margaret!"

Her head swung over on the pillow Her eyes flicked open

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She was very white. He looked at her whiteness and tried to say something. Nothing would come out. Her head swung away again. Her lips moved. "Jim. Why did you have to do it?"

"Do what, Margaret?" It was hard to keep his voice down.

She closed her eyes. The lips took a long time to answer. "The money. Malaga . . ."

"You—you guessed?"

"All that money. You promised . . ."

"Oh!" It came out as a long sigh. So that was it! He must have been crazy to think she wouldn't guess. He had had so much on his mind. His self-reproach sharpened, gave way to horror as the realization of what he had done grew in his mind. He had killed their child. Just as surely as if he had taken a gun. He had known how desperately she felt about Malaga. She had been overworked, worried. A moment's thought would have warned him of the danger. But he had been too busy with his own failure, too tied up in his own shame.

Lord, she must hate him! He realized it with a shock. If she came back to him it would be there in her eyes, always. He couldn't take it. He had taken a lot of things, but that he couldn't take. "Margaret." He leaned over her clumsily. "You must listen. I didn't think—Margaret, can you ever forgive me?"

Her voice came back to him coldly: "Well, you got what you wanted."

"About the baby, do you mean? How could I have wanted this? I want you. And now everything's gone to hell. I'd cut off my right arm—"

"No, Jim. You didn't want it."

"But I was all mixed up, can't you see? It was the money."

"Money. All you think about. Well, you've got your money. Now go away and spend it. Go away from me."

"But I haven't got it. It fell through. I walked out."

Margaret opened her eyes. She turned her head. "You what?"

"I walked out. I couldn't do it. I thought I could force myself to go through with it, but I couldn't. Then something happened that let me out, and I dropped it."

She stared at him in silence, searching his eyes for the truth.

"Please don't hate me," he whispered. "You're all I've got."

Almost imperceptibly something changed in her eyes. She moved under the bedclothes. She seemed to be trying to get her hand out, but she was too weak. She lay there looking at him, her face softer. She was seeing him suddenly, looking into him, and there was understanding in her gaze. She didn't smile or say anything, but somehow she didn't look quite so lonely.

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She closed her eyes. The nurse hovering nearby came over. "She looks very tired. I think you'd better go now."

He looked at Margaret. He wanted to tell her he loved her. He wanted to stay with her, so that she wouldn't feel the emptiness of what she had lost. He put out a hand. His hand was dirty. He didn't like to touch her with it. He stood there undecidedly for a moment; then he got a grip on himself and turned slowly out of the ward. He walked down the corridor.

There were emotions inside him that defied analysis. Relief, remorse; and something else, deeper than both. There was a feeling of being clean and dirty at the same time. He was clean in one thing. But in the other . . . He walked on down the stairs. Halfway down he stopped.

He turned round thoughtfully and went back to the Sister's office. The nurse was just coming out of the door.

"I—" he began, "I forgot to ask. Was it—a girl or a boy?"

"It was a girl."

"Thank you." He turned away confusedly. He walked out into the grounds. The sun was setting low down on the Atlantic. The world looked as if it was on fire.

A girl would have been all right, he thought. He wondered what she would have been like. Something that was a part of one and yet not one at all. Sort of like starting again. Yes, that was it. Why hadn't he seen that? Any man was a fool who didn't want the chance of making a fresh start.

Well, he wouldn't make the same mistake again.

Again, he thought. Why not? They were young. The idea steadied him. He didn't deceive himself; it wouldn't be easy. But for the next week or two he would be on his own; he had only himself to feed and it didn't matter to anyone if he went short. He had the loan of a thousand pesetas, enough to fall back on while he was looking for a new job. A real job this time —quantity surveying. He reckoned he knew enough for the start. It was worth the gamble.

Instead of going back to the Old Town, he turned suddenly towards the New, where the contractors' offices were—where, beyond them, building land that would bear the shops and blocks of flats—the boulevards of tomorrow—was daily being reclaimed from the African countryside.

★ ★ ★

ABYSS IS AS BAD AS A MILE

The most dangerous thing in the world is to try and leap a chasm in two jumps.

LLOYD GEORGE

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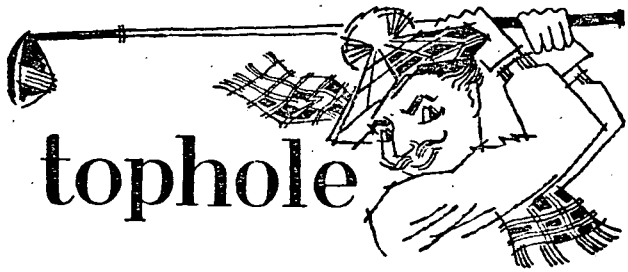

tophole

being Admirers of the Anticient
and healthfull Exercise of the Golf . . .

Minute Book of the Royal & Ancient
Golf Club of St. Andrews

" There's more in golf than hitting a good ball. That sort of golf is only the reflection of one narrow facet of essential golfishness. Behind golf there is a wonderful abstraction, Golf, which shows itself in gulleys, gulches, wild flowers in the rough, lost balls forgotten and dying in impenetrable jungle, rain, wind, cirrus clouds and cumuli, Constable landscapes, orange ladies in sandy bunkers, a significant tree, the lyrical prose of a *Times* golfing correspondent, all the history of St. Andrews, turf growing into a magic carpet, craning spectators and intrusive worm-casts, the worms themselves—there's a constant underground pilgrimage from the subterrene desert of a fairway to the rich Mecca of the greens—and think of hickory forests growing to their conscious destiny in the shaft of a club."

ERIC LINKLATER, *Poet's Pub*

St. Andrews! they say thy glories are gone,
That thy streets are deserted, thy castles o'erthrown:
If thy glories be *gone, they are only, methinks,*
As it were by enchantment, transferred to the Links.

GEORGE FULLERTON CARNEGIE, *Golfiana, 1833*

Off the Stroke

There are many kinds of golfer, and there are many kinds of girl, but there are only two kinds of girl with whom it is possible to play golf. One is the beginner and the other is the expert . . . A pretty girl-golfer is about as nearly perfect as a woman can be, but even that cannot make her punctual.

IAN HAY, *Pip*

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Sporting Spirit

Well I remember Lucy Grey
In skirt of twosome cut.
For on the links one Medal day
I boshed her winning putt

Her loving parents when they found
She came not home to tea,
Sought for her round the solid ground
And slightly out to sea.

And now in drift and driving sleet
They lost, with many a groan,
The speaking trace of Lucy's feet
And scarce could lift their own

Yet have I known of some who swore
The child might yet be seen;
They still could hear her thundering " Fore! "
Shatter the eighteenth green

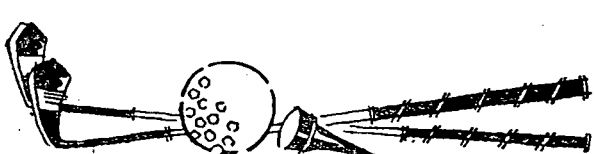
Then such have taken wings and fled,
Nor ever looked behind;
Fearing to see her bulger-head
Come whistling down the wind.

OWEN SEAMAN, *Lucy Grey*

Off-Putting

At a meeting of the Committee on 6th July 1909 the following query, sent in by Nga Moto Club, New Zealand, was considered It read: " With regard to ' Make and Form of Golf Clubs,' is it permissible to use a small croquet mallet to putt with? " They received the answer: " A croquet mallet is not a golf club and is not admissible."

J. B. SALMOND, *The Story of the R. & A*



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Go with a Swing

And what was that flash? By my oath, 'twas the gun
Which announced to St. Andrews the meeting begun.
And there, to be sure, was the usual array
Which greets one each year on the opening day.
Fair bevies of ladies awaiting the start,
Braw couples " teed up " and in haste to depart . . .
And armies of caddies in quest of a job—
Except, of course, swells like " The Daw " or old Bob.
The apple-faced sage, with his nostrum for all—
" Dinna hurry the swing! keep your e'e on the ball! "

LAWRENCE LOCKHART,
A Voice from the Rhineland

Gamesmanship

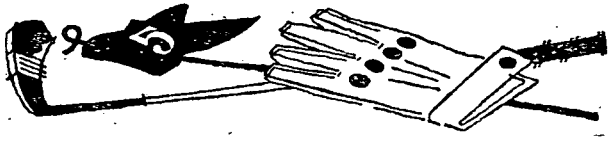
A shepherd tending his sheep would often chance upon a round pebble, and having his crook in his hand, he would strike it away; for it is inevitable that a man with a stick in his hand should aim a blow at any loose object lying in his path as that he should breathe . . . A shepherd, feeding his sheep on a links—perhaps those of St. Andrews—rolled one of those stones into a rabbit scrape, " Marry," he quoth, " I could not do that if I tried "—a thought (as instinctive as ambition) which nerved him to the attempt.

W. G. SIMPSON,
The Art of Golf

Matter of (Golf) Course

I keep my eye upon the ball
And never let it stray;
Which isn't hard, for, after all,
It's seldom far away.

DICK EMMONS



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LOVESICK RACEHORSE

Once a horse turns Romeo—
well, you never know . . .

BY DAL STIVENS

MY Uncle Henry was a sucker for auction sales. He couldn't keep away from them and he was always buying things, generally useless ones, at them. Once he came back to his farm with a dozen meat-dish covers which, as Aunt Lil said, might have been a good buy for a hotel but certainly weren't for them.

The meat-dish covers were in shiny nickel and ranged in size from a foot across to three feet. Aunt Lil used one of the smaller covers for a time but the others went into the barn along with the other junk that Uncle had bought. They stayed there, too, until we kids found that two of the smaller ones made good helmets, and played Ancient Romans and then firemen with them.

They were not the most comfortable helmets because the handles were fastened by screws and these dug into our heads. We undid the screws and didn't Uncle Henry create when he saw what we had done!

"I'll dust your pants for you if you lose those screws, my lads," he said. "These were one of my best buys."

"Best buys?" said Aunt Lil, sniffing her little nose and tossing back her neat little head with its bun. But she wasn't really angry about Uncle's auctions. As she said to my mother one day, "Well, auctions are better than other things, drink and—" she peered around to see if I was about and, deciding I couldn't hear at forty yards, added, "And women, you know."

Whatever the reason, auctions did something to Uncle Henry. They were to him what drink, drugs, and writing poetry were to other men—and, talking of poetry, there was something of the poet about Uncle Henry. He was about forty and had soft brown eyes like a spaniel, a wistful moustache, and a long melancholic figure.

Of all Uncle's buys none was more strange or exciting than the racehorse.

One morning Uncle harnessed up his old grey in the sulky and

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set off, wearing his Sunday-best blue serge suit, and a high starched collar which we disrespectfully called a whitewashed fence. Around it, Uncle Henry wore a knitted black wool tie with red stripes, and on his feet, shiny new brown boots that were tight across the instep.

Uncle was back early. At four o'clock in the afternoon I heard a yell from my brother Bill and scampered outside in time to see Uncle Henry bowling past in the sulky, leading a rangy, wicked-looking black horse.

"A real bargain!" Uncle shouted to us as he spanked past. Whether his voice frightened the black horse I don't know, but it started to rear and plunge.

It waltzed on its hind legs and showed its teeth. They looked as big as piano keys. The black horse squealed and tried to climb into the sulky with Uncle.

"There's only room for one of us here," said Uncle, and went out the other side.

The horse abandoned its ambitions to get into the sulky and now tried to kick it to bits. It smashed three planks and four spokes before it gave up and galloped away. My other Uncle, Septimus, attracted by the noise, ran out and caught the horse. Uncle Henry ran up to it and began anxiously inspecting its legs to see if it was hurt.

"Your bit of lions' tucker?" asked Uncle Septimus, who was a bachelor and the hard-headed member of our family.

"Yes," said Uncle Henry, "but not too much of the lions' tucker. He's a thoroughbred and I'll win the President's Cup with him. Fortunately, he's not hurt."

Uncle Septimus went up to the horse, patted its head, and then tugged its long drooping underlip down. A short nimble little man with fierce blue eyes, he gazed solemnly at the horse.

"Sixteen years if he's a day," he said.

"Six," said Uncle Henry.

"Leap years," said Uncle Septimus. "A stallion, too! And sour as hell."

"Sweet as a lamb," said Uncle Henry.

Septimus said nothing. He just looked pointedly at the sulky.

"It was my fault. I frightened him," said Uncle Henry.

"Sour as verdigris," said Septimus. "Look at that eye—wicked as sin. There's enough white there to whitewash your dairy."

The debate ended with Uncle Henry going off in a huff with the lanky black stallion, now apparently intent on living up to the reputation Uncle Henry had given it.

Septimus stumped off down the road to his farm. Septimus

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was fifty, ten years older than Uncle Henry, a few years older than my father, and a professed woman-hater.

The next morning Uncle Henry was mending the sulky when Septimus strolled over, assuming a carefully casual air. Septimus prided himself on his judgment in horseflesh and was determined to prove Uncle Henry wrong.

He watched the hammering without saying a word until Uncle Henry hit his thumb, and then he said, "How's the lamb today?"

"Six years," said Uncle Henry, dispensing with preliminary sparring.

"Sixteen!" said Septimus.

"Six," said Uncle Henry, and hit another finger.

"Sixteen," said Uncle Septimus. "Well, it'll certainly be something to write up in *The Advocate* when he wins the President's Cup."

"He is called Hyperion," said Uncle Henry. "He has a pedigree as long as your arm and his name is Hyperion. Would you like me to spell that?"

That was a shrewd hit by Uncle Henry, who was the scholar of the family.

"I can spell," said Septimus. "How much did you give for this Hy—bag of bones?"

"Dirt cheap at ten quid," said Uncle Henry, and winked quietly at me. I'd heard him tell Aunt Lil he had paid twenty. It was a good guess he'd paid thirty or even forty.

"Ten?" said Septimus, screwing up his tight little lips. They were usually as straight as a cut in a finger. "Might have been a bargain at seven. Give me a hammer, you'll be all day mending that sulky."

Uncle Henry had a mixed farm fifty miles from Melbourne. He grew wheat, grazed sheep, and kept a few cows. It was just after sowing and things were a bit slack, so, that afternoon, Uncle started putting Hyperion into training. Whatever the cause of yesterday's tantrums, the knobbly big black was all gentleness, and Uncle climbed aboard and walked him about a little.

Every day for a week after that Uncle Septimus found an excuse to drop over to Uncle Henry's farm. So did Bill and I—not that we worried much about excuses. At eleven every morning and four every afternoon Aunt Lil would bang a piece of pipe on the rusty old ploughshare hung up outside the kitchen and we'd race up for hot scones, cakes, tarts, and pastries. It was a pity that Uncle Henry and Aunt Lil never had any kids.

Every morning Septimus greeted Uncle Henry with "Sixteen!" and Uncle Henry yapped back with "Six." Septimus

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soon took to dropping in during the afternoons when Uncle Henry was exercising Hyperion. He sat on the rail and occasionally made some remark such as, " Might make a good sulky-horse though he's a bit old," but these got fewer as time went on.

And after about a fortnight he came out with, " Mind you, he's old but there might be one good race in him if you train him carefully." Then he added quickly, " Of course, he's a stallion and sure to turn as sour as hell. You'll have to watch out for your mares."

" Doesn't take any notice of them," said Uncle Henry. " Watch."

He turned Hyperion and walked him up to a couple of fillies grazing in the corner of the paddock. When Hyperion sauntered by, the fillies threw up their heads, took a couple of dainty steps forward, and whinnied invitingly. The black stallion did not even twitch an ear.

" A woman-hater, that's what he is," said Uncle Henry.

From that moment, Uncle Septimus was won over to the black horse, though he didn't admit it immediately. His sneers became fewer and fewer. At the end of a month he was begging Uncle Henry to let him help with the training. Uncle Henry good-naturedly agreed.

The stallion improved astonishingly. He began to dance like a two-year-old and his coat flamed in the sun. He remained gentle and ignored the mares.

" That's what I call good sense," said Uncle Septimus. " It's worth more than being young in years."

After a fortnight's more training there was talk of a trial gallop and Bill and I had to clear the fallen logs and old rusting farm machinery from the home paddock and fill in the rabbit holes.

On the day of the trial, Bill and I were kept in at school. When we reached the track, we saw Uncle Henry and Uncle Septimus pumping each other by the hand and shouting excitedly.

" Can't miss," said Septimus.

" It's a cert," said Uncle Henry.

" Win by streets."

" Cheap at thirty quid."

" You said ten."

" Bargain at any price."

" Not bad for a sixteen-year-old—perhaps twelve-year-old."

" Six-year-old."

" Perhaps ten-year-old."

After some handshaking, our uncles decided to enter Hyperion together for the President's Cup which was to be run in about a month. Then they fell to discussing a suitable jockey.

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"Will Jones," said Uncle Henry.

"Joe Rankin," said Septimus.

"Will's mouth is too big."

"So's Joe's."

I expected that they might argue over this for a couple of weeks but Uncle Septimus solved it on the spot.

"Hang it all, I'll ride the horse myself," he said. He hadn't yet got hold of the name.

It was settled. Uncle Septimus was a fine horseman. His weight was about nine and a half stone. Both he and Uncle Henry reckoned it wasn't too much.

"He could win with twelve," said Uncle Henry. "After we've won the President's Cup we'll try him in the Melbourne Cup." That was Uncle Henry's form.

The secret of the black horse's speed was kept. Uncle Septimus took to ridiculing the horse's chances to outsiders and Uncle Henry reckoned it would be a winner. People knew Uncle Henry and they believed Septimus.

The big day came. Uncle Henry and Uncle Septimus smuggled the black horse in, half an hour before the big race. They led him in by a back gate and took an unpopulated route to the stall. They could have saved themselves the trouble: most of the judges of form were in the beer tent—including the bookies. It was a hot dusty day and their throats were dry.

Uncle Henry and my father laid their bets. The odds offered against Hyperion started at fifty to one and shortened to twenty when my father put on bets for thirty quid with several bookmakers. They lengthened again to fifty when Uncle Henry put on fifty.

All Mundabilla was there, and shortly before the start the stand and the best spots on the rail were taken.

Hyperion was a lovely sight coming out of the saddling paddock. His coat was blazing, his tail and mane combed and brushed to life, and he danced on shiny hoofs, as though he was on springs. I heard a chorus of groans behind me and turned to see a couple of bookies looking pale and unhappy.

Uncle Septimus was in silks—white jacket and cap with red bands—looking as proud as Caesar. When they saw the smirk he had on his sunburnt old dial three other bookies groaned.

Hyperion waltzed down to the start and then waited quietly. Uncle Henry turned to Aunt Lil and said, "Well, this is one of my buys—" and then, because he was a kindly man, changed it to, "I'll buy you that diamond ring you want, old girl."

There were twelve other horses in the President's Cup, one of them a little bay filly that looked pacy but wouldn't last the

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distance, according to my father. After some jazzing around by the other horses, while Hyperion stood soberly, the barrier went up and they leapt away.

Hyperion was out well and went up to the front at the first-furlong post. He was going beautifully, too. At the second-furlong post he was fourth, and we could see that Uncle Septimus was taking it easy. The filly was out in the lead.

At the third-furlong post the filly was still in front, but beginning to tire. Hyperion was fourth but still moving without effort.

"By hang, he'll win by streets," said Uncle Henry, starting to jump up and down with excitement.

"The black has it in the bag," cried someone in a faltering voice behind us. He was one of the bookies.

At the halfway mark the filly turned her head and whinnied. It acted on the black like the lash of a whip. He threw up his head, neighed, surged forward, and drew alongside the filly, though Uncle Septimus was hauling back on the reins. The black stallion whinnied loudly and he craned his neck and began nibbling the filly's neck gently with his piano-key teeth.

"My gosh!" cried Uncle Henry despairingly. "He's fallen in love! Head over heels!"

He was right. The saying that there's no fool like an old fool is as true of horses as it is of men. The stallion had neither mind nor eyes for anything but the pretty little filly.

The field came nearer with two furlongs to go and the filly tired now and dropped back to third and then fourth place, with Hyperion tagging alongside, giving her neck little nibbles to express his love. Uncle Septimus's face went red and then purple. He tried to wrench Hyperion away and he lashed him with his whip, but for all the effect he might just as well have been a fly on his back.

The field swept into the straight, and when they went past the winning-post the filly was eighth. Hyperion was ninth and behaving just as foolishly.

Uncle Septimus was mouthing something as he was carried past by the two spooners. We couldn't hear but we could guess. His troubles didn't end there, either. The filly's grooms caught her and tried to lead her away. Hyperion played up as badly as any deserted lover.

He squealed. He stood up on his hind legs and pawed at the air. He tossed Uncle Septimus clean off his back, and a man who grabbed his bridle was dragged off his feet. He bounded away and got tangled in the ropes of the tea tent and brought it down on the hundred or so people inside.

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Uncle Henry led Hyperion home sadly. Uncle Septimus wiped his hands of him. " Women-hater, bah! " he muttered; and went off, limping, to console himself at the beer tent.

On the way home, however, Hyperion seemed to have repented of his behaviour. He trotted benignly and poked his muzzle in between Uncle Henry and me, asking for sugar.

By the time we reached home, Uncle Henry was talking of winning the Mundabilla Gold Cup at the big meeting next month. " It was just a lapse," said he. " Hyperion's forgotten that filly already."

Uncle Henry was just being Uncle Henry, because next morning there was no Hyperion. A trail of wrecked and broken fences showed the route he had taken—to the filly on the farm ten miles away.

Uncle Henry harnessed up the sulky and set out by the orthodox route—along the road. It took him an hour to get there and ten to get back. He returned by Hyperion's track, mending the fences as he came, leading Hyperion and the filly.

Long before he got home, Aunt Lil had got worried and rang five of the neighbours. " He's mending our fences and only right, too," one of them told her.

" Well, I expect it's not before time," said Aunt Lil, and hung up.

Uncle Henry had got the filly for fifty pounds. He said she was " dirt cheap." Hyperion couldn't bear to be out of the filly's sight, and when Uncle Henry started training him for the Mundabilla Cup, he had to take the filly along too.

After a week's sulking and ribald remarks, Uncle Septimus took to dropping in on Uncle Henry on some pretext or other, and after another week he was back in the partnership.

" Though, mind you, my faith in the black has been a bit shaken," he said. More than his faith was shaken: he was still limping slightly. " I've no time for gallivanters," he added.

Hyperion ran good times in training—so good that Uncle Henry took to studying the records of all the big races in Australia, including the Melbourne Cup, and the Kentucky Derby.

Uncle Septimus was elated but guarded. " Once a horse shows himself a Romeo—well, you never know," was how he put it.

" Romeo nothing," said Uncle Henry. " Double harness has been the making of him. It has settled him down. It'd be the making of you, too, Septimus."

Uncle Septimus only grunted.

" Suppose he breaks out at the meeting and falls for another smart filly? " asked Septimus presently.

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"Not Hyperion, he's the faithful type," said Uncle Henry emphatically.

Nevertheless, Uncle Henry welcomed Septimus's suggestion that one of the hired hands should ride the filly along the road behind the finishing-post before the start of the Mundabilla Gold Cup. As Uncle Septimus put it, it would keep Hyperion in the straight and narrow.

On the morning of the Gold Cup meeting, the odds against Hyperion started at fifty to one. They lengthened to sixty and then seventy when Uncle Henry told a couple of people in strictest confidence that Hyperion had been cured and was a cert to win. My father and Uncle Henry got an average of sixties for the fifty pounds they put on. Ten pounds of it was Septimus's money.

When the horses paraded before the start for the six-furlong Gold Cup, the odds against Hyperion lengthened to a hundred to one. Two trim little fillies had been entered.

At the barrier Hyperion would not settle. He whinnied, tossed his head, and pranced about. He jigged up to one of the fillies and bared his teeth. Then we saw the little bay filly with the hired hand up come teetering along the road. She whinnied excitedly. Hyperion started and threw up his head, he backed, then whinnied to her. Uncle Henry beamed and nudged me in the ribs.

Hyperion moved forward. The barrier was raised. Hyperion bounded out in a great lurch. Within a hundred yards, he was two lengths in the front. His legs thrust at the ground; his thighs went like the pistons of an express. It beat anything he had done at the trials, and at the two-furlong post he was five lengths in front.

Uncle Henry shouted joyfully, "He'll win by the length of the Harbour Bridge." The ground slip-streamed away under Hyperion's belly. Bill and I started jumping up and down. Aunt Lil forgot her dignity and did a little ladylike skip.

But then the filly leapt the fence behind the finishing-post and bolted up the track to meet Hyperion. The hired hand was no longer her rider, but her passenger.

"That's torn it!" cried Uncle Henry. It looked as though he was right, for once. Hyperion and his little filly went bounding to meet each other, whinnying with joy. The Gold Cup could go hang for all those lovebirds would care when they met—they'd pet in the middle of the track and the field would sweep past them.

The hired hand fought the filly hard. He managed to turn her back along the track only one hundred and fifty yards short of

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Hyperion. The black stallion went even faster. His lead at the four-furlong post had been eight lengths. By the fifth, he had caught up with the filly and his lead had grown to fifteen lengths.

The filly slowed to a joyful canter though the hired hand whipped her. Hyperion braked to a joyful trot though Uncle Septimus whipped him, spurred him, and cursed him. Hyperion's lead dwindled quickly. It was twelve lengths and then ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three. Hyperion pulled up to a little better than a walk.

"Oh my gosh!" groaned Uncle Henry.

Over the last sixty yards Uncle Septimus bellowed, flogged, and dug his spurs in. Hyperion ignored him. He neighed with inane delight at seeing his bride. The filly cavorted, jigged, flounced, pirouetted, and went through the horse equivalents of powdering her nose and putting on her face. They jazzed over the finishing-line together with half a length to spare, and left us so limp you could have knocked us over with a straw

Ten yards past the judge's box, the filly suddenly stopped flirting. She nipped Hyperion hard with her teeth and lashed him with her hoofs. She was squealing as though she was put out about something. They rescued Hyperion after some trouble, and Uncle Septimus came up to meet us.

He was furious and didn't seem to care that we had won.

"Just as I said, a danged Lothario," he spluttered. "He was giving the eye to all the little fillies until he heard his missus whinny, and then he got the breeze up and beat it to prove to her he never had such a thought."

"You've got no proof, Septimus," said Uncle Henry, "and anyway, we've won."

"I wouldn't bank on it," said Septimus. "There'll be a protest." Septimus was wrong. There were fourteen protests, one each from the owners of the other horses in the Gold Cup.

"As for proof," said Septimus while he waited to see what the judges would do, "the little filly knows. That was why she took to him."

"Just pleasure at seeing him," said Uncle Henry.

"Funny way of showing pleasure," said Uncle Septimus sourly.

Then the flag went up to show the protests had been dismissed. The judges and stewards had thumbed twice through the book of rules and found that there was nothing directly prohibiting what had happened.

In a few minutes Uncle Henry found himself being hustled along to be presented with the Gold Cup. It took the efforts of

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Uncle Henry, Uncle Septimus, and the hired hand to get Hyperion to the table. He just couldn't take his eyes off a little black filly parading for the next race.

I don't know if the six hundred pounds he'd won in bets made any difference but Uncle Septimus didn't make a single rude remark about four-legged Romeos.

Afterwards, Uncle Henry sometimes talked of entering Hyperion for another race, and then he'd stop short and a look of resignation would come over his face.

I'm sure he was seeing again that glint in the black horse's eye as he leered at that little black filly.

★ ★ ★

FROST BITES

The menu, ducks? Well, we're very modern here, as you see,
So it's all Frosted Food. Now, what is it going to be?

You can have Gloup, that's glacialized canteloupe,
Or how about some thick or clear Froup?
There's no more Chod;
If there had of been it would of been chilled cod.
There's Frissoles
For them that like frosted rissoles.
Perhaps you'd like Fripe—hard-frozen tripe—
Either with Thunnions, that's on-the-thaw onions,
Or with Charrow, marrow chilled to the marrow.
The other veg. is Pail, I think it's peas done like hail.
There's a note on the menu about Geels.
The Manager, Mr. Rupert, has written they're both jellied
and gelid eels.
Showing off again! For afters there's Icina,
Which is what happens in the machine to semolina.
The other sweet's Tenbelunket, or ten-below-zero junket.
If you pay the supplement, you can have Frananas.
Warm them in your hand a little,
They're awful brittle.
And be careful of your teeth on the Tocoffee,
Because it's coffee treated with liquid air till it's
harder than toffee.

The atmosphere seems cold? Well, the nip
Is due to the size of the tip.

R. G. G. PRICE, *Hotel Cauchemar*

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DARK SNOW

There was danger in the glint of the rancher's gun

BY RICHARD FERBER

SHERIFF CLINT FONDA wouldn't normally have crossed the pass in the snow. He would have stayed home with his wife and watched the heat from the pot-bellied stove steaming up the windows. He was approaching the age where the cold seemed to settle deeper in him, to last longer. But today he had felt that he couldn't delay.

The time for electing the Sheriff was drawing near, and perhaps they wouldn't expect him to come over through the snow this way, but they'd know he was doing the job. It was a job that he needed, and after one more election he could be certain of keeping it. Or certain enough. At least then they could stay in one town, in one house . . . in a home, as Emily called it.

He rode hunched in the saddle, the collar of the blanket coat pulled high around his neck and a handkerchief tied down over his ears. The snow had stopped and the sun had climbed almost to noon. But it was cold. Emily would be sitting in front of the stove, perhaps sewing, or perhaps just thinking of the sewing that she planned. There'd be curtains for the windows next, he guessed, and she wouldn't stop there. She meant to make a home this time.

When he rode into the street the wind was blowing, piling the snow high against the porch of the Clayville Bank. It was Sunday, and most of the stores were closed. But a dozen ponies were tethered in front of Sam Perkins's General Merchandise, and as he stepped down he recognized Cal Meyers's pinto standing head down at the rack. He put a hand on the animal's neck and felt the little mare shudder under his touch.

Meyers had been riding her hard, he thought absently, and wondered what trouble the man was in this time. Feeling along the saddle, he found no sign of a branding-iron, but he smiled. Cal Meyers would be an expert with a cinch ring, he decided.

When he opened the storm doors he could see the men crowded against the little bar that Perkins kept at the side of the store.

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They were packed tightly so that he couldn't see Perkins at first, and even Old Man Carley had left his cribbage game to join them. Fonda pushed his way through, until he saw Cal Meyers standing in front of the bar. He had a bottle in his hand and was talking excitedly; his eyes rolled as he spoke, and he kept bringing the bottle up eagerly to his lips.

Fonda watched him for a moment. Cal Meyers's hair was plastered flat with sweat and a little whisky trickled down through the grey whiskers on his chin. "There must have been a thousand of them," Meyers was saying. "Maybe more. They was spread out all over that little valley above Cartwright's . . ."

They all saw Fonda then and turned, some of them edging away so that he could see Dan Tolvey sitting at the table with two of his riders flanking him. His long, thick frame was slumped in the chair and his coat was open, showing the gold watch chain and below it the studded gun belt and the pearl butt of the revolver. He nodded to Fonda, but his eyes were cold, expressionless under the great whiteness of his bushy brows.

"You got here just in time, Sheriff," he said. "We were about ready to send a man looking for you."

Fonda's glance ran through the crowd. They had grown silent except for a man here and there whose words he didn't understand. "What is it?" he said, and then to Tolvey, "What is it, Mr. Tolvey?"

At the bar Cal Meyers took another drink and snorted. "What is it?" he mimicked. "What is it? Why it ain't nothin', Sheriff. Least it ain't gonna be, not for very long."

Tolvey stared at him. "Cut that out, Cal," he said quietly. "Just tell him."

"All right," Cal Meyers said, and his face reddened. But in a moment he regained his composure and glanced importantly around the room. "You see, I was ridin' down that little valley up over Cartwright's place, not doin' anything, just ridin'. I was mindin' my own business, Sheriff . . ."

At the back of the group somebody laughed. Dan Tolvey chuckled dryly and said, "You reckon we'll find some of Cartwright's beef wearin' a different brand, Cal?"

Meyers straightened up indignantly. "No, sir, Mr. Tolvey. No, sir, I wouldn't do nothin' like that."

"Go on," Tolvey said.

"Well, sir, it's like I said," Meyers continued quickly. "I was ridin' along, not doin' nothin' in particular, and pretty soon I start hearin' these sounds. Mighty queer-like they were."

No one was talking now. The knot had formed again, leaving only a path between Meyers and the table where Dan Tolvey

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was sitting. The men leaned forward eagerly. Beyond them Fonda could see Sam Perkins, his round, pleasant face etched strangely with worry.

"No, them sounds were like nothin' I ever heard," Meyers was saying. "So I kept on ridin', goin' on down the valley past that big stand of pines. And pretty soon I top a rise. And there they are." He paused, his glance lingering long enough to take in each man. "There must have been two thousand of them," he said, as though incredulous of his own words.

Fonda waited patiently.

"You wouldn't believe it, Sheriff," Meyers said. "You just wouldn't believe it." He put the bottle down at his elbow, shaking his head, and then glanced up again at Fonda. "They was sheep, Mr. Fonda," he blurted out. "Two thousand sheep, walking all over that little valley there."

To Fonda, it was comical at first, the little man with one hand spread out in front of him and his eyes growing rounder. He was playing for a drink, Fonda knew. But he saw the grimaces of the other men. Dan Tolvey was still sitting with his coat thrown open to show the gun. He would use it quick enough, Fonda thought; he was too old to change.

Fonda stood there, smelling the whisky, the odour of it sharpened by the heat of Perkins's stove, and mingling with the damp sweat of bodies. And he thought what bad luck it had been to come across the pass. If only he'd waited . . . another day would have been enough. But now he would have to be careful.

"I guess I'd better ride out there," he said at last. "There's nothing we can do until we find out."

But he knew it wouldn't be as easy as that. Ross Hodding snickered and let his hand come down on the bar with a slam. "Find out?" he shrilled indignantly. "What's there to find out? You heard what Meyers said. There's sheep in the valley. I reckon that's all we need to know."

Fonda eyed him with quick resentment. Ross Hodding had always been a troublemaker, he thought, like Meyers, except that Meyers only wanted whisky, and enough of some neighbour's beef to keep him alive. But Ross Hodding wanted something else, and his failure, his bitterness had carved deeply into his mind, twisting it, and twisting the hard lines of his face.

The storekeeper, Perkins, was leaning on the bar and looking out placidly at the crowd. "Seems like you're making a lot of fuss, Ross," he said. "You ain't got so much grass that a few head of sheep would hurt it."

For a moment Hodding was taken aback, then turned, and stared at him angrily. "I got my rights," he said, and his voice

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strengthened. "I got my rights—like any other cattleman." A man at the back tittered, and Tolvey's chair creaked as the big man pulled himself up.

He stood with one hand raised towards the crowd and the other hand fingering the massive links of the watch chain. The voices died, and the feet shuffled gradually into silence.

"We've all got a stake in this, men," Tolvey said. "Hodding and all the rest of us." He made a half turn and stared narrowly at the storekeeper. "And that goes for you, Perkins."

Perkins gazed back at him, his face flushed by the warmth of the room, and said nothing.

"You all know how I stand," Tolvey went on. "I came into this valley when there weren't nothing but Indians and buffalo. I fought sheepmen before most of you were born. I don't intend to see them cuttin' up our grass now."

Fonda pushed his way through the men and leaned down with his hands spread flat on the table. "Listen, Mr. Tolvey," he said, "I ought to ride out there first. We can't do anything until we find out."

"You'll need help," Tolvey said.

"If I need help, I'll come back for it."

"The Sheriff's right," Perkins spoke up from the bar. "There ain't no sense in us all goin' out in the cold. And another storm's blowin' up. Let Fonda go. That's what we're payin' him for."

Fonda stood up and tugged at the collar of his coat. "I'll be back in a little while," he said. "We'll know then."

Tolvey was staring at a spot somewhere on the battered surface of the table. He shook his head without looking up. "It'll be dark by the time you get back," he said. "And Meyers has told us all we've got to know. He says there's sheep out there. Maybe you think Meyers is wrong?"

They all turned and looked at Meyers. The little man was leaning against the bar now, the bottle dangling from his fingers. He brought it up to his mouth and drank, and then let it drop again as though he hadn't heard them.

"Meyers knows sheep when he sees 'em," Ross Hodding said. "A man can't be that much of a fool."

"How many were there, Meyers?" Fonda asked sceptically.

"What?" Meyers said.

"How many were there?"

"I told you, two or three thousand. It was hard to tell, snowin' and all."

"I mean men, Meyers," Fonda said.

Someone behind Fonda laughed and said, "You callin' them mutton-eaters men, Sheriff?"

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" All right," Fonda said. " *How many men were there, Cal?* "

Meyers gazed thoughtfully at the bottle. " They had a bunch of Mexicans with 'em," he said finally. " I counted six or eight altogether. Didn't see no wagons, but they must have left 'em in the woods." He drank again and placed the bottle by his elbow. Perkins, standing a few feet away from him, reached out and started to slide the bottle off the bar.

" Hold it," Ross Hodding said, waving a hand to stop him.

Perkins shook his head. " Meyers'll put me out of business faster than any sheep can."

" Hold on," Hodding demanded again. He reached into the pocket of his shabby waistcoat, brought out a silver dollar, and laid it carefully on the bar. Perkins glanced from the coin to Hodding's face, and for a moment stared in disbelief. " You tryin' to start something, Ross? " he said accusingly. " You know Cal. Two drinks and he don't remember anything. You'll have him tellin' us there's ten thousand head of sheep out there and the whole Mexican Army to protect 'em."

" There's sheep out there," Ross Hodding said stiffly. " It don't matter how many."

" Sure," Perkins said. He leaned back and spat disgustedly below the bar. " And we've got a sheriff, ain't we? We're payin' him to do the job." Nobody said anything. Tolvey's fingers drummed on the tabletop. Behind the bar Perkins glanced around nervously and his face broke into an uncomfortable smile. He pushed the dollar back towards Hodding and said, " I guess there ain't nobody objects to havin' a drink with me."

Cal Meyers reached for the bottle again, but the rest of the men looked at Tolvey and were silent.

" It's a cold day," Perkins said lamely. " There ain't nothin' better than sittin' in a warm place and drinkin' whisky with friends."

Tolvey glanced at him narrowly. " We'll have your drink, Sam," he said, his voice flat, without gratitude. " And then when we're finished, we're still ridin' up the valley."

Perkins shrugged and tried to keep smiling. He began to put up glasses as the men edged silently to the bar. Fonda went to the bar, leaning against it, and watched Perkins pour him a glass of whisky. " You better talk to them," Perkins said, keeping his voice low. Fonda took up the drink without answering.

" I've seen it before," Perkins said persistently. " Twenty years ago, when there weren't nothing else here but Tolvey's place, and a couple of others. You can still see the bones up by Harper's Creek, and they ain't all sheep bones, either."

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Fonda drank the whisky and set the glass down hard on the bar. "They're sheep, Perkins," he said irritably, louder than he meant to. "I guess these men have got their rights."

"Sure," Perkins said. "And you've been a law man a long time, Mr. Fonda. You know what a mob's like."

Fonda said nothing. He wasn't thinking of a mob, or Meyers's three thousand sheep, or half a dozen Mexicans making a lonely camp in the snow. He was thinking of what bad luck it had been to come across the pass; if only he'd waited another day. They couldn't have sent a man after him; they would have done it themselves, without him. He wouldn't have had to stand up to them now. Or decide not to stand up to them at all.

He fingered his glass and looked up at the storekeeper, and for a moment wondered if Perkins would understand. He wanted to tell him why he was listening to Tolvey and Ross Hodding, and doing nothing himself. He felt the weight of the star under the thickness of the blanket coat.

Yes, he knew what a mob was like; and he knew what it was like to go from one town to the next, staying a year or two, and moving on again when the place was cleaned up, or they got tired of you, or wanted another man. It had been all right once, when he was younger, when they'd lived in a boarding-house, or a one-room shack without curtains on the windows. Now it wasn't enough, and if he spoke up . . . They were all cattlemen, and they'd never expect him to go against them.

He turned from the bar and saw Dan Tolvey motioning to him. He walked over, pulling up an empty chair, and sat down. Tolvey had his gun out and was carefully reloading.

"I guess Perkins is tryin' to stop this," he reflected casually. "I hope you've got no such notion, Fonda."

"I don't know, Mr. Tolvey."

"Perkins is an old man, a storekeeper. He's no fighter. He's scared of guns, and he's scared of blood." He paused, glancing up at Fonda. "You scared of blood, Sheriff?"

Fonda looked at him helplessly. "Listen, Mr. Tolvey, let me ride out there first. We don't know what's out there. Maybe they're lost. Maybe they'll turn back. But you know what'll happen if we go out there with Meyers and Hodding. You won't be able to stop 'em." Tolvey moved the cylinder of the Colt to the empty chamber and eased the hammer down.

"I don't mean to stop 'em, Fonda," he said.

Fonda stood up, and for a moment he was angry. "Is that all you wanted, Mr. Tolvey? Are you through now?"

"I'm through," Tolvey said indifferently. "Just don't forget, Fonda. You'll only lose."

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Fonda walked to the doors and opened them and went outside. The wind had stopped blowing and the air was cool, brisk, so that after a minute his ears began to grow numb. He turned down the street and stopped at the corner and looked along the street. The town ran to one long block of false-fronted buildings, and beyond that the houses, and then Judge Randolph's place, rising taller with its white pillars and high, narrow windows.

He looked back at the store, and saw that the doors were still closed. Except for the ponies at the rack, the street was empty and silent. He hesitated for a moment, then left the walk and half trotted along the plaza until he came to a picket fence, and then turned up the walk swept neatly clean of snow.

He waited some minutes before the woman opened the panelled door and looked out at him. "Afternoon, Sheriff," she said.

"Hullo, Mrs. Randolph. Is the Judge home?"

She nodded and stepped back to let him in. When she opened a door off the hall he saw Judge Randolph seated at his desk, a cigar poised delicately between his fingers. The Judge got up, offering his hand. He was a tall, slender man, dressed sternly in black that set off the whiteness of his hair and moustache. "Ah, Sheriff Fonda," he said, and motioned Fonda to a chair.

"I can't stay," Fonda said. "I guess you heard . . .?"

"I heard," Randolph said solemnly.

"We haven't got much time, Judge," Fonda said. "I thought maybe you'd talk to them. They'll listen to you, or they'll listen to Tolvey."

Randolph's eyebrows lifted. "Tolvey. Yes, a fine man," he said. "A crude man, but they're all like that, these ranchers."

"We haven't long," Fonda said. "If you'll talk to them . . ."

"Of course, this is cattle country," Randolph said thoughtfully. "We have to consider these things very carefully. There are some constituents that wouldn't understand. Cattle and sheep seem to be the only clear-cut politics among these men."

Randolph smiled and got up from the desk. "But there are other principles, aren't there, Mr. Fonda?" He went over to the hat rack and took down the narrow-brimmed Stetson. "You say Tolvey's there?"

"Yes," Fonda told him.

"Then I suggest we go down there and put a stop to this nonsense," he said, and went past Fonda to the door.

When they turned into the street they could see the men coming out of Perkins's store. A few of them were already in the saddle, and old Carley was leading a pair of horses down from the livery. Some of them were drunk now, Fonda saw. Cal Meyers was squatting down, leaning against the banister where the snow had

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drifted, and he was holding a bottle of whisky between his knees.

Judge Randolph took off his hat and waved it over his head. "Men," he said quietly.

A few of them stopped talking to look at him. "Hullo, Judge," someone yelled.

Judge Randolph smiled. "Men," he said again, "I guess we all know what's happened. I heard about it just now, and I came down here immediately. And I guess you've all made up your minds. But—" he waited again for the murmuring to die out—"but it's not too late to change it."

He stood serenely while some started to turn away, and here and there a voice rose in angry protest.

"You all know how I feel about sheep and cattle," he said finally, his hat raised again. "There's not a man among you that has the courage to link my name with the sheepmen. This is a cattleman's county, and it will stay a cattleman's county. But, men, you can't disregard the law. This man—" he turned, looking for Fonda, and found him standing on the porch beside him—"this man is the duly constituted authority of the law! You voted for him. You pay his salary. Let him go out."

Dan Tolvey had swung off his horse and was thrusting his way through the crowd. He stopped at the bottom of the stairs and looked up at Randolph. His eyes were fiery now. "Is this your stand, Randolph?" he said. "Because if it is . . ."

There was no mistaking his meaning. Randolph stopped, confused, and turned to Fonda. "I thought you said Tolvey—"

"I said they'd listen to you, or they'd listen to Tolvey," Fonda said quickly. But he knew it had only been a half truth.

He saw Randolph's face go pale, and the man turned slowly back to the railing. He was sweating now, a tiny drop of moisture running down the muscle of his neck. But in a second, unperturbed again, he said, "Dan," his voice became louder, "I guess you've had your say. Now I demand the right to mine."

Tolvey nodded without speaking.

"Men," Randolph went on, "you all know my record. And I know yours. And when I ask you, why not let this man, the duly constituted officer of the law, go out and do your business for you, I know what your answer is going to be. You don't have to tell me. There are times, sad times, when one man representing the law is not enough, when the law itself is not enough!" His voice rose, and then he stopped. "I regret, men, that this just happens to be one of those times."

In the street the men let out a yell and started back to their horses. Judge Randolph turned from the railing, and Fonda could see the sweat running on his forehead. He stepped in front

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of him. "That was a nice speech, Judge," Fonda said coldly.

Randolph glared at him. "What's your stand, Fonda?" he said at last, and Fonda thought he could see a trace of a sneer at the corner of the Judge's mouth. He stood motionless as Randolph went past him down the street.

The men were all in the saddle now, the horses milling about and chopping up the mud. Perkins had come out of the store and was peering about, and he could see his lips moving silently.

"Listen!" Fonda yelled. "Listen, men! You don't want to be responsible for this. It'll seem different tomorrow . . ."

They weren't paying attention to him. Down the plaza a man had swung wide round the livery and was coming at them at a reaching gallop. "It's Bob Layton," somebody yelled.

Bob Layton pushed his hat back and wiped his brow. "I ran into 'em above Cartwright's," he said. "Big bunch of 'em and more than a dozen herders. Got into them before I knew what was happening. Had to run for it. Wouldn't have, if there weren't so many of 'em. I think I winged one, though."

"You got one of them?" Tolvey asked.

Layton shrugged indifferently. He was a young kid, not much past twenty, with a dark stubble of beard. He took the Colt from the holster and began reloading from the cartridge belt. "Hard to say. I'm goin' back, though." He let his glance drift along the street, cocky and challenging, as though he hadn't seen the horses. "Anybody goin' with me? I only need a couple."

"You say there's a dozen of em?" Tolvey asked.

"More than that, near as I can make out. Wouldn'ta run if there hadn't been that many." He slipped the gun back and untied the lariat from the side of the pommel. "Looks as if you folks are set on a party. There's a knot I learnt once, from an old guy from Sedalia. It's a hangman's knot, or leastways, that's what he called it—"

Fonda moved down the stairs and started across the street. He caught Layton by the shoulder of his coat, and before the boy could pull away he jerked him from the saddle.

Layton fell on his side and rolled over. He got to his knees, and then to his feet, still gripping the rope, and Fonda drove his right hand solidly to the jaw. The boy stumbled backward.

He hit him again, and Layton fell back against the high sidewalk of Perkins's store. He tried to protect himself, and once his hand groped desperately for the gun. But Fonda slapped it away and brought up his fist so that the boy's head jerked crazily. Then he stepped away from him, and Layton's body went loose, and he sat down heavily in the snow.

Fonda picked up the rope. He walked a few feet away and

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then turned back to Layton. "You always wanted to kill someone, kid," he said. "You've still got your gun This is as good a chance as any."

"You oughtn't to do that," the boy said, his voice whining. "You being the Sheriff and all . . ."

"All right," said Fonda. He turned away, feeling weak now, the anger drained into helplessness. Dan Tolvey had reined his horse around and had stopped in front of him. He leaned forward, crossing his arms on the saddle horn. "You can't take everybody's rope," he said softly. "You can't take mine."

Fonda's eyes moved to the holstered gun. The rancher's coat was pulled back and the pearl butt of the Colt glinted in the sunlight. It was only an even chance. And then there was the rest of them. "No, I guess I can't," he said.

It was too late. He looked down at the rope and let it slide through his fingers. Perhaps an hour ago, he thought . . .

"You ready?" Tolvey said.

"I'll get my horse." He moved to the rack and turned the pony out and climbed into the saddle. He saw Perkins standing in the doorway of the store, and he thought he saw reproach in the man's eyes. You've got your job, he said almost aloud. You don't have to worry. You wouldn't have to move. He was thinking about Emily, and the curtains, and the red glowing stove as he swung out into the street; and behind him Perkins was yelling, "Men, listen to me, men! Don't do this! The drinks are on me—all the whisky you want—"

But a man yelled jeeringly back to him. "Stay open, Perkins. This ain't gonna take us long." It took them more than an hour before they reached the creek, and forded it, the ponies' hoofs cutting crisply through the thin layer of ice.

"It was about here," Bob Layton said. He had his gun out and was standing straight up in the stirrups. "Over there," he pointed, "there was a bunch of 'em. Mexicans, mostly."

They saw the sheep first, a hundred grey shapes against the sloping hill of snow. They came to their feet painfully when the first gun went off, and Fonda heard the soft, muffled slap that the bullets made against the wool. He tried to yell, but he could hear only the gunfire and the muted bleating of the sheep.

Swinging his pony round, he saw Dan Tolvey sitting motionless, staring at him. "They're sheep, ain't they?" Tolvey seemed to be yelling, but he couldn't be sure.

It was over in a minute. Thirty dim shapes sprawled clumsily against the snow. They were moving out, back towards the wood where the main bunch must be, when they saw the man.

He must have been there all the time, but he seemed to rise up

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on infirm legs, and now he staggered a few steps and sat down again. He was a Mexican. Even in the distance and the fading light they could tell that. His voice drifted to them eerily in the silence. " Por Dios," he was saying in a high wailing voice. " Por Dios y todos Dios."

He didn't seem to see them. He crawled to where a dead sheep lay and gazed down at it. " Por Dios," he said again.

They crossed through the trees and came out on a rise and saw where another band of sheep were bedded in the shallow valley below them. At first there was no sign of the herders. And then they saw the woman. She stood out alone, away from the pines, and she was watching them. She was old and gaunt; her arms hung limply at her side. She stared at them stupidly.

It took them a moment to get used to the fading light of the clearing. The lean-to stood in the shadow of the trees, with two ponies tied beside it, heads down and facing the wind. Another man came out on his hands and knees and then got to his feet. He stumbled and pitched forward once so that the rifle he carried sank into the snow. But he got up, dragging one leg behind him. He went past the woman and she reached out for him, her voice suddenly shrill, hysterical. " Calvin. Please, Calvin! "

He shoved her aside and went on with his body bent, coming towards them. The woman clung to his arm. " Calvin," she shrieked. " Please, Calvin. Oh God." Out of the corner of his eye Fonda saw Bob Layton's gun come up. Fonda swung the pony out in a loose, easy trot, and fired.

The boy toppled out of the saddle and plopped on his back in the snow. He tried to get up on his elbows and then sank down again. Fonda reined his pony into a backstep and sat facing the men. He looked at Tolvey. I'll take him first, he thought.

Tolvey sat still in the saddle, looking beyond him, waiting. The old man had sunk to his knees again, and the woman was down beside him. In the stillness a horse threw his head, and a bit rattled faintly. Ross Hodding gazed beyond the trees, away from the old man, and tried to slip the Winchester noiselessly back into the scabbard.

Finally Tolvey stood up in the saddle and ran a thick finger along the flesh of his nose. " Bring him up here, we'll see what he's got to say," he said, and a moment later added, " What's your name? "

" If I had my rifle," the old man muttered.

He had to tilt his head back to look up at Tolvey. " Please, mister," he said. " They're all I got. There ain't but five hundred head there. I was aimin' to go across the pass—"

" Where you from? "

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"South," the old man said. "South of Denver. They drove us out down there. Killed one of my herders. There ain't nobody left but me and the wife and that old Mex. Did you see that old Mex, mister?" Tolvey didn't answer.

For a minute he sat staring at the clearing, and his eyes seemed to turn inward and grow harder. "Three thousand head of sheep," he said evenly. "And a dozen Mexicans."

They built a fire on the other side of the clearing, against the hill where the old man's lean-to squatted. One of Tolvey's riders had laid the old man on the ground. Coming in with an armload of wood, Fonda saw Meyers sprawled drunkenly among the trees. There was no sign of Ross Hodding. Then he dropped the wood by the fire and walked over to where Dan Tolvey was leaning against the saddle of the big chestnut gelding.

Fonda had the star in his pocket now, and he took it out and turned it over once in his hand. "I guess you want this, Mr. Tolvey," he said quietly.

"What?" Tolvey asked.

"You said you wanted this, Mr. Tolvey. You made it clear enough, back in town."

Tolvey glanced briefly at the star, then away. A moon had climbed above the ridge, and they could see the valley stretching flat and white beyond the trees.

"I wasn't thinkin' of that," Tolvey said at last. "I was thinkin' of when I first came to this valley. It took a tough man to stay alive. I was bigger, and maybe smarter than that old man back there. But I didn't have any more guts, Fonda."

Fonda didn't answer. In the distance a coyote barked once and sent out its long, echoing wail.

"We ought to put out somebody to stand guard," Tolvey said. "They tell me a coyote'll raise hell with sheep."

"So I've heard," Fonda said.

"I guess I'd better send somebody to the ranch for coffee and beef. A man can't live on mutton all winter. Can he, Fonda?"

"No," Fonda said. He opened his coat and tried to pin the star to his shirt, but his fingers were numbed by the cold, and finally he dropped it in his pocket. There'd be plenty of time, he thought. There'd be plenty of time tomorrow to put it back.

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ROUND OF APPLAUSE

A speech is like a wheel: the longer the spoke, the greater the tire.

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SOMETHING FOR HIMSELF

" Fits like a glove," Grandpappy said stretching out happily

BY ROBERT S. CLOSE

OLD Grandpappy Stevens found the three teak boards lying under a pile of rusty bedsteads in Wooloomooloo Willie's junk yard. The dealer thought they were just Australian hardwood, but Grandpappy, in years gone by, had been a ship's carpenter, and knew that beneath the old paint and grime that covered them was good, solid teak, such as he had not handled for many a long day.

So when he was charged only five shillings for the lot, his veined and knotted hands were shaking a little with excitement as he paid the money, and began loading the boards on to the battered pram that he always brought with him on his regular pension-day excursions to Willie's junk yard. When he had the planks firmly stowed and lashed down, he hitched the rope harness around his shoulders, and towed them home to the little workshop he had built in the backyard when he had at last retired from the sea.

For two days he worked hard, scraping off all the paint until the rich colour of old teak showed through and the boards shone like bronze shields. He propped them against the bench and, sucking his stub pipe, sat on a case, and looked at them with deep pleasure. Now and again he reached out a gnarled hand, and trailed his fingers down the smooth surface of the board nearest him, as if stroking the cat that purred beside his feet.

He tried to think what he could make with the beautiful timber. This time it would have to be something especially good. But the cottage was already crammed with tables, pedestals, and so many other pieces of furniture he had made in his workshop that it would be hard to find room for a carved walnut shell.

And because of the housing shortage, there were also crowded into it two of his married daughters, their husbands, and just how many children between them he could never quite remember—except that he knew they were all girls, with a jumble of names

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he could never remember so he had taken to calling every one of them Joe.

In this there was perhaps some reflection of his unfulfilled wish that one of them might have been a grandson, a boy who would have sat watching him while he made beautiful things out of the scrap pieces of timber he scrounged from the junk yard on pension days. But that was an old regret, and one to which he had become reconciled. It was seldom that a son came to be born in the Stevens family, and his own three had all been girls, too.

And now it seemed that his eldest grand-daughter, who lived farther down the street, was going to make him a great-grandfather, but since it would only be yet another girl, he felt it would not give him much pride.

As he sat looking at the teak boards and thinking of these things, the shadows of time seemed to seep up around Grandpappy Stevens like a tide of all the years he had lived. Memories came drifting down on him, like leaves of an autumn sadness.

Nobody really needed him any longer. Indeed it must be a nuisance to have him about the house every day—even though he spent most of his time away from the house in his workshop. And the women were always worrying about him, dreading he would get run over every time he went out.

All nonsense, of course: he knew when to port, starboard, or heave to for the traffic while crossing the road. Anyway, he couldn't expect to live a great deal longer, he reflected without either sadness or regret, for he had had a full, rich life.

And then, suddenly, just as he was knocking the ashes from his pipe, he knew what he would build with the teak.

He got up briskly from the case, and took a piece of chalk from the tool box. Next he backed against the wall and, placing a ruler on his head, marked up his height with chalk, and then marked where his shoulders touched. Next he drew a line joining these marks and continued it down to where his feet had been. Making certain allowances, gained from many years' experience of working with wood, he took measurements from the shape he had drawn and, lifting a teak board to the bench, reached for his saw.

During the following two weeks, Grandpappy could hardly be dragged from his workshop even for his meals. Because he worked with the door shut, and kept a sack drawn across the window, his activities caused quite a lot of curiosity among the family. But he obstinately refused to answer any questions about what he was making this time, except to say it was something for himself.

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One morning he had the job finished at last, all except for the handles, and he would look through Willie's junk yard for those, next pension day. He wanted brass ring handles, such as were fitted to cabin doors aboard ships.

The teak had polished beautifully, and when Grandpappy ran his fingers over the wood, the joins could not be felt even with a fingernail. He stood back and looked at his work with pride. "A better coffin was never stowed in the ground," he muttered.

Gingerly, Grandpappy lowered himself onto his knees and, crawling carefully into it, stretched out with a happy sigh. Fits like a glove . . . Never been so comfortable in my life, he thought. Almost reluctantly he eased himself out of it to try the lid. When he had it in place, he tested the screws, brass ones that wouldn't rust, placing them into the counter-sunk holes he had made, and found he had lined them all perfectly.

It was all ready for the day he needed it, and until then it would be a secret.

For some time he had been having a little nap each afternoon, and now that the job was finished, he somehow began to feel the need of it more than ever. There was an old sofa in the workshop on which he used to rest, but it seemed to Grandpappy that the coffin was more snug, and he soon got into the habit of crawling into it each afternoon for a quiet snooze, together with the cat, which would purr itself to sleep, and keep his legs warm.

One day, when he was sleeping gently, the sack he had placed across the window slipped off, and his eldest daughter peeped in curiously as she passed on her way to the clothes-line. Her screams brought the family racing out of the backdoor, and wakened Grandpappy.

Giving vent to a few choice oaths, which sometimes bounced from him as incorrigible relics of his seafaring days, Grandpappy crawled dazedly out of his coffin, and opened the door. He was immediately swamped in a flurry of loving arms, and his face became spattered with tears of relief.

When the lamentations and caresses had subsided, he reconciled himself to the discovery of his secret, and attempted to divert attention from the doleful utility of the coffin to the finer points of its workmanship.

"It's all good, solid ship's teak," Grandpappy pointed out proudly. "Once I get in it, there won't be one in the whole dang cemetery that will outlast me. No, nor anyone more snug, either."

The protestations that burst out at this point only made Grandpappy irascible. "Stow all the flaming wailing!" he shouted. "And here, you women," he said, fitting the lid on the coffin,

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" see these screws? Well, they're the ones to use on the lid. I'll put them all neat and tidy in a little bag inside the box. And see that those black crows put them in properly, without making any scratches on my polishing, do you hear? Because if they do, by heck, I'll hop right out and knock seven bells out of them! Now get out, the whole dang lot of you, and let me finish my snooze."

Like an angry old rooster, he ushered the women, and the brood of little girls who had drifted in, out of his shed, and banged the door shut.

" Women . . . danged women! " he said irritably to the cat. " Every country seems to be swarming with them. A man can't get any peace from them, even in his coffin." Laboriously, he crawled back to finish his doze, and the cat leapt in after him and snuggled between his legs.

But as the days went by, Grandpappy gradually seemed to lose his enthusiasm for combing over Wooloomooloo Willie's junk yard every pension day for pieces of timber. Instead, he took to snoozing in his coffin, or sitting in his old horsehair-stuffed chair on the verandah. And somehow there seemed to be just a little less of him each week.

One day he was aroused from a snooze by a bedlam of excited cries. Opening an irritable eye, he saw a bevy of his little granddaughters bouncing around his chair on the verandah, so shrill with excitement that he was unable to catch one clear word.

" Belay! belay your gab—the whole crew of you! " he roared in his topsail voice.

Instantly there was silence—except for the scrape of teetering toes, and panting excitement.

" Now, you . . . little Joe," Grandpappy stabbed a finger at the little girl nearest him. " What's the meaning of all this? . . . Rousing me out of my watch below like this, eh? " he demanded.

The little girl's eyes widened in excitement, and she struggled to hold her breath long enough to listen. " Aunt Elsie's got a little baby— And it's a little boy, Grandpappy! It came while you've been asleep," she burst out breathlessly.

" What's that? A boy, you say? " Grandpappy said slowly. He straightened up in his chair, and thumped the arm. " Impossible! I don't believe it! There's been a mistake! " But this time his voice was drowned in a chorus of eager and, from the elder girls, indignant denials.

" All right, all right! Here, you, Joe, pass me my stick—I'll dang well go up to Elsie's and see for myself. And if you Joes have made a mistake—look out. I'll keel-haul the whole crew of you! " he threatened.

But there was no m stake, as Grandpappy Steve s had joyously

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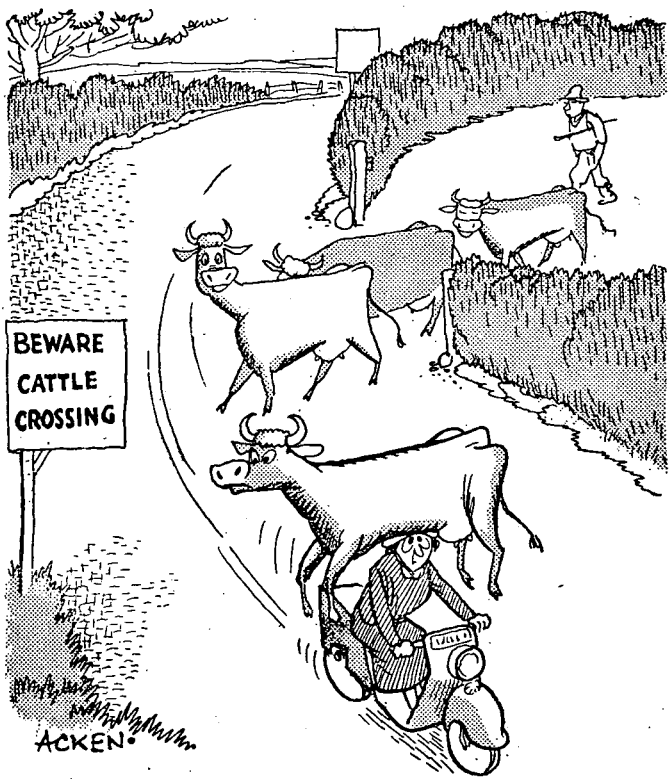
to admit after he had trotted up the street to his grand-daughter's home and been permitted a brief peep at evidence that indisputably made him great-grandfather to a boy.

He was so excited that he left the house without his stick. His head was full of plans. Elsie would have to christen him Joe, he decided, as he let himself in his own gate and headed for his workshop. There would be a real Joe in the family at last.

Inside his workshop he dragged the sack curtain aside to let in more light. Already he wanted to begin making something for the boy baby. He looked thoughtfully at his teak coffin glowing richly on the floor. Then he reached for a screwdriver and, bending over the coffin, began to take it to pieces.

And as he thought of the beautiful crib he would make with the teak, Grandpappy Stevens looked twenty years younger.



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Plain and Pearl

She's not complete that Cloaths adorns,
Or does in aught but Nature shine.

MATTHEW COPPINGER

Orient Purlieus

" Perhaps you would prefer the diamonds and the pearls," he went on, pointing disdainfully at the box.

" No, no. I hate them! I hate them all! I will not wear your jewels. You have no right to think that I am that kind of woman," she cried hysterically.

E. M. HULL, *The Sheikh*

Sense of Purpose!

Pearls fade out when they're not worn. There was an opera singer at the old Chicago Opera used to wind her pearls round her white cat at night. In fact, always had a white cat for that purpose.

EUGENE WALTER, *The Untidy Pilgrim*

Fine Feathers

In the show—called " Whoosh! "—20-year-old Monica Lyons in an ostrich feather hat—and nothing else—is introduced as a pearly queen.

Mrs. Lily Lodge, pearly queen of Lambeth, complained. She told the show manager: " Pearlies are a church organisation. You must stop this."

News Item

Cultured Type?

I told him I thought that any girl who was a lady would not even think of having such a good time that she did not remember to hang on to her jewelry.

ANITA LOOS, " *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.*"

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DINGO ON THE RUN

It was not good to linger in man's territory

BY A. N. ALEXANDER

HE was stretched full length upon the rocky height that overlooked the valley far below. The slanting rays of the late-afternoon sun tinted the treetops with gold. He gazed intently upon the scene spread out before him, his keen eyes missing nothing that stirred. A wallaby bobbed up on a ledge some distance away; the dingo tensed for an instant, but he did not move. It was not yet time, and he was patient. For what they were about to do demanded all his skill and cunning. He watched the sun sinking lower—soon it would be time.

Tonight, they would hunt in the valley again. Two nights ago they had found good hunting there. The dingo sniffed the evening air, his ears cocked and alert. His mate was weak with the birth of her pups; it was hard for her to stalk the agile small game. Down in the valley there was easy killing; he had never ventured so far before, where the hated scent of man was strongest, but the bitch was slow and weak. When they had come upon a calf, she stood waiting in the long grass, and let the dog make the kill . . . One mighty thrust of his savage jaws ended the kicking creature's struggles.

They had dined royally, making off to the hills after their meal for it was not good to linger in the territory of man. Now the great dog nosed the air, gazing into the valley; he could not know there was a price on his head—that the cattlemen were waiting for him.

The sun dipped below the horizon, the taunting laughter of the kookaburras echoed through the hills, the creatures of the night began to wake. Still he did not stir, but lay with his head between his paws, and waited. From somewhere up above, in a tall gum, came the guttural grate of a possum. The dingo flicked up one ear, then relaxed again.

It was now quite dark. The stars came out one by one, flashing like pinpoints of diamond set in black velvet . . . there

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was no moon. At last the great dog stirred. He got up silently, and like some shadowy thing that was part of the earth itself, he slid over the rocks till he came to a black crevice between two boulders. He nuzzled at the entrance and was answered by a soft whine from within. His mate was ready. She stood up, shaking from her the six little furry bundles, the blind little lumps that staggered and crawled over one another, helplessly seeking her maternal warmth and shelter. She carefully sniffed them over; then, satisfied, went out into the night.

Silently, the wild dog led the way down the hillside, pausing now and then to nose the air, the bitch loping along a short distance behind. At length they came to the edge of the pasture. Standing there beneath a clump of wattle trees, they sniffed eagerly . . . the smell of fresh meat. Cautiously, they approached. There it was, a big lump of beef lying in the grass, juicy, inviting.

The bitch whimpered, licking her lips, and made ready to dash at the meat. The dog snapped at her, the hair on his neck standing on end, a low rumble sounding from the depths of his throat. The bitch stood back, one front leg lifted, her paw poised uncertainly. The dog anxiously scented the air. He was puzzled.

Somehow, mingled with the inviting odour of the meat, there was the scent of man. Just a little, but there it was. The dog walked suspiciously round the meat, pausing now and then to smell at it. He was puzzled, but experience had taught him caution. He stood back, growled, and made off across the pasture, leaving the meat where it lay. The bitch followed at her patient trot.

It was strange . . . the scent of the cattle was strong, and he saw the animals on the grassy slope ahead of them, but no calves. They moved silently across the open country, then he caught it again—now much stronger than before—the man-scent. He knew, too, that the station dogs were there. The great dog stopped. He felt the breath of his mate beside him. The danger that threatened was too great; he would not go on.

Suddenly, the furious barking of dogs, two ear-splitting reports, and the dingo heard something whine past close to his ear. He yelped at his mate, and they fled across the open country, the dogs and men in hot pursuit. The barking of the station dogs carried for miles in the utter stillness of the night. The dingoes loped across the pasture, their speed too much for the eager dogs. They bounded through the clump of wattles; a startled wallaby crossed their path, but they sped on, racing through the thick undergrowth that covered the hillside.

The bitch was panting heavily. Fear had lent strength and

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swiftness to her tired limbs, but now she was nearly spent. The big dog stopped. His mate came up, her tongue lolling; her ribs were heaving, the breath condensing in the cool, crisp night air. The dog yelped, and made off through the bush at a right angle to the path they had been following; the bitch went on ahead, making straight for her lair and the pups.

The dog went on for a short distance, then stopped again . . he sniffed the air prodigiously, and his lean brown flanks were heaving. He jumped up to a fallen tree, trotted along the trunk, and perched on the end, where the great roots had lifted out from the earth, and now starkly pointed skyward, as if in some mute, petrified appeal.

The wild dog waited. He could hear them lumbering up the slope—the scent of man and dog was strong in his nostrils and a cold terror had seized his heart, but he stood firm upon the old dead tree. The yapping of the dogs floated up the hillside; then, suddenly, an outburst of excited barking and the flash of lanterns. They had picked up his scent; the party turned to follow where he had led. The leading dogs were a perilously short distance away when the wild dog dropped from his perch on the old dead trunk, dropped like a stone into the blackness.

The dingo toiled up the hillside, going ever higher and higher. With a mighty effort, he leapt up to a ledge of rock—then, almost at his heels, he heard a savage snarl. The foremost dog, a great yellow brute, had caught up with him. It made an effort to leap upon the ledge, as the wild dog had done, but failed at the first attempt.

The dingo turned, at bay. The hair on his back stood out like a great crested ridge, his ears backed flat against his skull, the lips were curled in a monstrous snarl that bared every polished white fang—for action.

The dog made the ledge at the third attempt and the dingo flashed upon him, the slashing fangs seeking the thick yellow throat. The station dog bellowed from the depths of his belly, and sank his teeth in the wild dog's shoulder. They rolled on the narrow ledge, a tangled, furry mountain of spitting fury. The dingo bore his opponent down; he slashed the yellow dog's throat, but he could not get his vital, death-dealing hold. The station dog ripped and wrenched, and then, in an instant, the battle was over—with a yelp of dismay, the yellow dog tumbled backwards over the ledge. The dingo stood panting as the enemy staggered to his feet, and a great shudder shook his frame. Then he was off up the hillside again. His pursuers had almost reached the ledge.

He toiled across the hill that was a patchwork of rocky outcrops

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alternating with dense brush. Steadily he left his enemies behind. The great hunter was being hunted himself this night, but his pursuers could not match his strength and stamina. This was his home territory; where they stumbled and faltered, he bounded steadily on . . . on and on, leading them miles away from where his mate, the dingo bitch, lay in the crevice, suckling her six pups.

At last he came to the crest of the hill, and loped down the far side, leaping fallen tree trunks and tearing his way through the undergrowth. That the men and their dogs hoped to catch him would never occur to him . . . but something deep down in his canine mind impelled him to go on, until he had put miles between himself and the hunters. The pain in his wounded shoulder stabbed him now and then, and little drops of blood trickled from the bruised flesh, but he went on, with the twigs of brush scraping his coat, like eager, cruel little claws clutching for the tender spot.

Dropping lower down the hillside, he heard the rumble of a waterfall, and his nostrils drew in its delicious, fresh sweetness. He made swiftly for the water.

Just below the fall, he came out upon the bank, where the stream foamed and bubbled over the round yellow pebbles. He splashed eagerly into the water, lapping at it greedily, moving in the direction of the opposite bank and downstream at the same time. Once, he fell headlong into a deep pool, and had to swim a few yards. The cold water stung his shoulder. He clambered out on the far bank, dripping wet, his great tail hanging like a bedraggled flag. With a mighty shake, he flung the water from his coat, and plunged on into the brush. He caught the scent of bandicoots, but he did not turn aside.

At length he stopped—he had been on the run for an hour. He listened and sniffed, but could not now detect the scent of man or dogs.

He heard the familiar sounds of the bush at night. Close at hand a boobook owl uttered his call—*boo boook!* And far down the gully, came the answer—*boo book! boo boook!* A bushrat scuttled in a patch of long grass, and far above his head, the bats tweeted in the treetops. A big black shadow flicked across the velvet backdrop of the stars; it landed with a light thud upon the smooth trunk of a lofty mountain ash; then, as his parachute of flappy skin folded under his belly, the giant glider possum scuttled up the tall trunk, his great brush tail flopping behind him as he disappeared upwards into the inky black.

The wild dog paused to lick his injured shoulder. The strength

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slowly seeped back into his tired limbs. He shook himself and sniffed the air again, to take stock of the neighbourhood. He was in new territory, far from his old haunts—new territory that he might have to fight to hold, but right now he needed rest.

A sudden loud crashing in the undergrowth pricked his ears. He heard the bending of the brush and the snapping of twigs. A fearless creature was coming, scorning the soft approach on silent pads, lumbering heavily on stout-muscled legs. For an instant, the wild dog's hair bristled, then he relaxed as he caught the familiar scent. Out of the brush came the old man wombat, heading for the dingo, snuffling the earth, yet missing nothing with his little beady eyes. Like a monstrous tank he came, armoured with muscle and hide, and powered with stubbornness. The wild dog stepped aside, allowing the formidable marsupial, who seemed to take no more notice of him than if he had been a tree stump, to pass on. The snapping and crunching of the undergrowth slowly faded into the distance.

The dingo went on, searching for a hiding place, to rest from his efforts. He clambered down the hillside, through the dog-wood scrub. The broad rim of the moon was rising above the crest of the distant range.

At length he stopped, sniffing eagerly. A great dead tree barred his path, its blackened trunk festooned with white and yellow fungus, like fairy masks hung upon the old dry wood. He followed the trunk along until he came to the end, buried in a pile of hardened earth and tangling scrub. He brushed aside the growth, and sniffed . . . the great old tree was hollow . . . he had found his resting-place. He crawled inside, and lay down on the soft damp bed of leaves and earth . . . licking and licking, to ease the throbbing in his shoulder.

Floating up from the gully there came the sound, the howl of a dingo. He lifted his head to listen, the licking stopped. Soon the call was answered—the cry of the dingo bitch. He cocked his ears for a moment or two, then resumed his licking.

He would rest during the night in the log, and he would stay in that cool sanctuary when the sun came up, and sleep. Then he would awaken hungry, and when the moon thrust its pale light above the purple of the distant range, when the creatures of the night were abroad, and the scent of the gums hung heavily in the still night air, he would go down to hunt in the gully.

★ ★ ★

ARGOSY FOR H.M. FORCES

When you have read this copy of ARGOSY, why not pass it on to a member of H. M. Forces?

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MANASCO ROAD

VICTOR CANNING

Angrily, Nick Thorne returned to the hotel at Puerto. He might have known that Domingo Peroni, his gay, unreliable partner, would let him in for trouble. On its face, the deal had seemed like money for jam—money that would take Nick and his wife Kate home to England, away from the Spanish life she hated. Peroni had bought the cargo of the foundered ship Maria. All that remained was to salvage it, but Nick, going to inspect the Maria, found that the only road to the cove where she lay ran over land owned by Señor Manasco. "My uncle is away," lovely, hostile Juana Manasco told Nick. Defying her gun, Nick gatecrashed the house, but had a bleak reception from Manasco and his nephew. "Your partner got the cargo by a dirty trick," Manasco said shortly. "You can sell it to me at cost or it can stay there and rot. You have three days to decide." As well as this ultimatum Nick had a deeper worry—his adored Kate's tearful confession that she had been unfaithful to him. He couldn't forget—and he didn't feel he could forgive . . .

IT was still early when Thorne got back to the hotel. Kate was up. She was in her dressing-gown, at a little table by the open window, having her breakfast in the sun. He came in feeling dirty and unshaven, and angry at the trouble on his hands.

Kate smiled at him and the movement of her head and shoulders.

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the quiet beauty of her face reached into him, thrusting past his anger. " Nick darling. Lordy, you're in a mess! "

Warm, concerned words without a trace of hesitation . . . last night, he knew, not forgotten, but discarded. That was one of the things he loved in her: she was always ready to push disappointment into a dusty pigeonhole; always ready to try again.

" Domingo's sold me a pup, I think. I could wring his neck! "

She laughed. " I've heard you say that so often."

She poured him coffee in her own cup and brought it over. He bent forward and kissed her on the cheek as he took it. She smelt good, womanly . . . Her face was close to his. He saw the fine lines at the corners of her eyes and the faintest touch of lingering fatigue shadow under them. He'd married a girl and he now kissed a woman. There was no holding back the seasons, but with the years he loved every new Kate that came; girl, woman, mother.

He said, " We've got to get back to Palma. Peroni has bitched this whole thing up. I've got to get the truth out of him. Why I trust that man as much as I do I can't think." He sipped at his coffee, knowing but not minding that she didn't care a scrap about his business just now; she was content to have him there.

Kate said, " You've scagged your coat. Here, on the shoulder." She put up her hand and touched the cloth, and he knew she wasn't touching the cloth, she was touching him, wanting him.

" I had to do a bit of climbing." He put his cup down on the table. " If Manasco thinks he can stop me . . ." He was talking for himself, not for her.

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"Take it off. I'll mend it while you're bathing and shaving. You look terrible with all that stubble." She moved behind him and her hands were on his shoulders. He slipped the jacket off and she turned away slightly, dropping it on the bed. Suddenly the previous night seemed a long way off . . . a kind of stupidity. As she turned back to him the movement drew her fair hair loose across her neck and with the swing of her body the dressing-gown opened. "Who is Manasco?"

"A very angry man, though heaven knows why."

She laughed and her head came down to him. The falling line of her chin and throat had a quick, vivid loveliness. Manasco and the night's business dropped from him, and he felt the anger in him sweep into a new channel, become an unnamed strength. This was the morning, this was Kate, the sun was shining. He put up his hands roughly and held her under the arms, feeling the softness of her small breasts against the heel of his palms.

"You're not caring a damn about Manasco." His hands were fierce on her as he stood up.

"No, Nick." Her face was lifted to him, the eyes shut as though the hard grip of his hands were tearing her with sharp pleasure. "No, Nick, I don't care about this job . . . about anything but us."

"I ought to thrash you! I ought to cut your heart out." He shook her.

"Do anything," she cried, "but don't be a rock. Don't be cold, Nick." Her fingers were on his arms and she shook him. The movement brought them together and the moment her body was against his, the violence broke. He picked her up and as he carried her, her lips were over his face.

As he flung her onto the bed one hand reaching for her caught at the yoke of her nightdress and the thin silk ripped. She lay there, half naked. The blood thundered in his head and the hunger in him was like a sword-thrust as he threw himself down and gathered up the fierce offering which, open-eyed now and smiling with love, she waited for him to take.

Long afterwards, as she lay calmly in his arms, she said, "That nightdress cost me a thousand pesetas."

"Cost me."

"You, then." She smiled and then sighed. He felt her body flex and stretch in his arms and he knew what the movement meant. She was content to know that the love between them had begun to heal the wound in him.

But as he lay there thinking, he knew that the thing was still to be lived with; he had to get used to the new Kate, the woman who had been able to turn away from him, no matter how briefly, and no matter where the fault lay or how it was shared. For a long time he knew that there was going to be the shadow of a third person hovering anonymously near them. He could not shut his mind to the presence, couldn't will it into limbo. It had to be endured until it went of its own accord.

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"What are you thinking about, Nick?" Kate asked gently.

I'm just thinking, he told himself, and that's the trouble. I don't want to think.

He laughed and, caressing her fondly, said, "I should be getting off to Palma. Rome's burning . . ."

"Let it . . ." She raised herself above him, looked deep into his eyes, and then her lips came down softly.

It took some time to bring his partner, Domingo Peroni, to the point. He sat heavily on the window-sill in their Palma office and rubbed at his eyebrows. He looked deflated and dejected.

"All right, Nick . . . I tell you the truth. Absolutely the truth. I went round to Madame Paradiso's place some days ago, not for what you think. She is my friend and sometimes I call in for a chat with her and the girls. This boy is there and he is very drunk. Neither of us knows who this boy is. Just a boy, a nice Spanish boy, except that he is very drunk. If I'd known he was Guido Manasco!"

Thorne began to have some idea of what might have happened. "He was talking, I suppose?"

"Yes, Nick. He was talking about this cargo auction. It was the first I had heard of it. From this boy I learnt that he was down here to bid—"

"On his own account?"

"Yes. He kept on about that. His uncle wants him to be a good business man and this was his first deal. If I'd known he was Manasco's nephew! Is it my fault if he's young and gets so drunk? If you're in business you must not get drunk and talk. Someone takes advantage. It is recognized. Business is business."

"So you kept him away from the auction. How?"

Domingo stood up. Slowly he pulled himself together and a severe dignity crept over his face. "There is a story going round the town that I drugged him. This, I learn from Manasco's agent here, is what Guido swears happened. But this I swear is not the truth! Not the truth!" Domingo smacked his fist into his open palm.

Thorne looked at Domingo. He had known the man a long time. Domingo could lie convincingly. But one thing his pride would never let him accept was a false accusation. He was full now of temper and indignation.

"You believe me, Nick?"

"Yes. I believe you, Domingo. But Manasco won't. If Guido says he was drugged, then that's that. Why didn't he turn up at the auction?"

"Because nothing could get him away from Madame Paradiso's. He was so drunk . . . as young men sometimes are. He didn't come round until the next day. After the auction was over."

"In the meantime you'd been busy?"

"Of course. I am a business man. I went round quickly and found out about the auction. It seemed a good thing. My cousin

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Vargiu agreed to take the stuff—and then I decided to bid. The boy didn't turn up and the cargo fell in my lap. Nobody else was interested."

"Of course not. You've got to go across Manasco's land to get the stuff out."

"On the report and auction details there was no mention of the owner of the land. You think I would knowingly start something like this against a man like Manasco?"

"No, I don't. But it's a bad business. Guido, to cover himself, obviously went back and told his uncle that you'd had him drugged . . . Nice boy!"

"But, Nick, if we tell Manasco the truth, show him the boy is lying—then he will be different, maybe . . . No?"

"No. He's in, and he's going to stand by the boy. Now he'll show him how to handle the situation. And you and I, Domingo, are going to pay for the lesson."

"You mean, Nick, that you'll take his offer? Give up the chance of all that profit just because a boy gets stupid drunk and then lies about it? Is this business?"

Thorne smiled, but there was no true humour in him. "All right, Domingo. I haven't decided anything yet."

Domingo nodded. "That's right. I have great faith in you, Nick. Maybe there is some way we can outplay Manasco. For instance, couldn't we hire lighters and take the cargo out by sea?"

"We won't get a tug or lighters—from what I have heard of Manasco. Not in Palma. Not in Barcelona. Not anywhere. We're stuck with two thousand pounds of cargo we can't move. No one will dare to work for us. The only thing we can do is to sell it to Manasco at cost and watch him take the fat profit we'd marked out for ourselves, unless—"

"Unless what, Nick?"

Nick swung round and came back towards Domingo. His face was hard and severe, his mouth drawn thin. "Do you want to take his offer? Or would you like to fight him?"

Domingo blew out his fat cheeks gently. "I do what you say, Nick . . ."

"If we don't take up his offer within three days he won't give us another chance. If we fight him, we could lose. You know what that means? We'd be bankrupt."

Domingo took out a cigar and bit off the end. "I do what you say, Nick."

Thorne began to move towards the office door. "I'll call you back in a little while. This needs thinking out."

He found Kate in the kitchen preparing a late lunch. He took her by the arm, led her into the sitting-room and sat her down. He mixed a couple of dry martinis, handed her one, and then, walking about the room with his own, gave her the facts, baldly and quickly. "The point is," he finished, "what do we do? Take his offer or have a go at him? I want your decision."

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"Why my decision?"

"Because it affects you as much as me."

"Did Peroni have the boy drugged? Your honest opinion, Nick."

"No." There was a hard practical streak in her that came out when she met a problem. She wanted facts before she gave her decision. He liked that.

"And Manasco won't let you use his road and is already stopping you from hiring lighters?"

"Yes."

"Have you got any idea how you'll get over that?"

"No. Not yet. Johnny Manchester at Puerto might help. But generally I haven't an idea."

"David and Goliath?" Her eyes were on him and he knew she was gauging him, reaching to him, watching for every shade of thought and emotion in him.

"That's what it would be. Except that I don't think my chances are as good even as David's were."

"But you don't care a damn about that?" She stood up, putting down her glass.

"My feelings don't count. It's your decision."

"Any decision I make must include your feelings, Nick dear. Neither of us can escape that." She said it quietly, sincerely, and her hand came out and held his arm. "You don't like being pushed around. I don't like seeing you pushed around. If ever a man was asking for a fight at this moment, you are. If that's what you want, then I want it—"

"Keep me out of this. You say."

"I am saying. Can't you see that, Nick? I'm saying what I want. What I want for me and what I want for you. It isn't a question of money, is it? Or of pride being hurt if you take Manasco's offer. It's something else . . . something I can't find the words for, yet. Except to say that you want a fight. But I've only got to look at you to see that it's important, that it's got to be. So I say fight . . ."

He put his arm up and slipped it round her shoulders, drawing her to him. This was it then, and he was aware of a warm feeling of relief in him. Yes, he wanted a fight. Maybe it was the medicine he needed. That was putting it in words a little more clearly than Kate could—or would—just now. But he knew what she meant; knew more clearly perhaps than she did—though he wouldn't bet on that. By fighting he did something for himself and for Kate. The other thing was there, a shadow over everything . . . he had to fight, to smash something in order to prove himself to her. He'd lost stature with her . . . he couldn't escape that knowledge. When a thing like this happened between man and wife it could only mean that—the man had lost something in the woman's eyes. And now he had to come back. As simple as that.

Some men would beat the hell out of their women and come back. Some men would beat the hell out of the other man . . . He

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didn't want either of those. He wanted something bigger and here it was, right in his lap. He had to kill a giant for her; had to blind himself to the possibility of defeat and look always to the triumph of victory which would bring him back and hold her to him for ever. And, by God, he'd do it.

They drove back to Puerto late that afternoon. It was dark when he went along to Johnny Manchester's garage. The old man and his family lived in three rooms above the place.

Rigo, Johnny's son, let him in. They went through the dark garage and up the stairs to a sitting-room.

Johnny was sitting at the table reading. On it there was a bottle of wine and two glasses. Johnny's wife, a quiet, grey shadow, brought another glass and then went and sat by the window. Johnny filled the three glasses. Rigo sat down on a stool by his mother. He was a handsome, well-built fellow. Once, Thorne thought, Johnny must have looked like him. Quickly and briefly, he explained his difficulties to Johnny . . .

" You could help me, Johnny. We've worked before."

" No, señor. If there were a chance, I might be with you."

" What about the other men up here? Can I get any of them? "

" No, señor."

Thorne paused. Kate should see this, he thought. Me pushing over a brick wall. So far he'd only bruised his knuckles. He lifted the glass of wine and drained it.

" But everyone around here can't be in Manasco's pocket? " He snapped his lighter to a cigarette angrily.

" He has a big pocket."

" Full of pesetas," said Rigo.

" In the ship basin there's a big flat-bottomed lighter. Who does it belong to? "

" Marla, one of the fishermen."

" Is he in the pocket, too? "

" I don't know."

" You used to have all the answers, Johnny."

" He still has, but he's careful with them now," said Rigo.

" With a good, powerful motor boat and that lighter I needn't waste my time, Johnny. You've got such a motor boat."

" Señor Thorne, you are wasting your time. Why do you not respect my desire for a quiet life? The boat is not for hire."

" Or any other boat? "

" Or any other boat."

Johnny's wife looked up and said sharply, " Señor Thorne's glass is empty."

" Pardon, señor." Johnny refilled it.

Thorne lifted the glass and nodded at Johnny across it. " Manasco has a good friend in you, Johnny." He saw the lean turtle-neck stiffen, and the old man's eyes, colourless under the shadow of the bushy eyebrows, narrowed.

" Manasco is not my friend, señor . . ."

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" What is he like? "

" He's a man who can carry two water-melons under each arm and still have his hands free."

" What's his business? "

" Name something," said Johnny, " and you have it."

Rigo looked up, and said brutally, " Silk, steel, plastics, wines. And other things, for which it is hard to find polite names."

" I meant no offence to your father," said Thorne to Rigo. " It is just that I do not like to see good men live in the shadow of small men."

" Who does, señor? " said Johnny. " But then there are many things we do not like but have to accept."

" All right, Johnny. I have no more to say, but I am not finished with Manasco." Again there was a pause between them all. Then he saw Rigo put out a hand and touch his mother without looking at her.

" But I have more to say," Rigo said suddenly. " I am of an age when I do not care for quietness—when there are some things that I must do, even at the risk of offending my father and my mother."

" You will not offend me, Rigo," said his mother.

" You will offend me," said Johnny. " But no doubt I shall learn to live with it."

" Then it is settled," said Rigo.

Thorne stood up. " Just what is settled, Rigo? "

" That there will be trouble," said Johnny. " But for once I shall watch it instead of being in it. Remember, Señor Thorne, he is my son. At times unsatisfactory—but my son."

" He is a man and has a right to make up his own mind," said Johnny's wife.

" There is no need to say all these things," said Rigo, putting his hand inside his jacket and scratching his chest. Then, looking at Thorne, he went on, " The motor boat is mine. My father gave it to me a year ago. You will need things for our work on the *Maria*. Tomorrow morning they will be ready."

Thorne said, " You will work with me? "

" Yes, señor."

There was a quality of stillness and strength in Rigo which was disturbing. Somewhere, buried deep, Thorne had the feeling, there was a bitterness of which even Rigo was afraid.

He turned to Johnny.

" You knew he would do this? "

" No, señor."

" Then if you tell me not to accept his offer, I will refuse it. I don't want to cause trouble in this family."

" There is trouble in every family," he looked across at his wife, " but we understand, señor, and Rigo's trouble is nothing to do with you."

Rigo slipped on a woollen windbreaker, letting it hang open over his singlet.

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" Let us go and talk to Marla. At this hour he may be drunk enough to do a deal for his lighter."

It was midnight before the deal was made. Thorne had paid more than he wished but less than he had expected.

He walked back with Rigo and they went out along the sea wall of the harbour to the lighter. It was tied up alongside the small seaman's shelter. A big, flat-bottomed old scow with plenty of draught . . . and as ugly as hell, he decided, to handle in anything like a sea. However, with luck the weather would be good to them. Twenty trips with it and they might well have cleared the cargo, bringing it round to Puerto and then shipping it on to Palma by lorry. Domingo could look after the lorry end.

" Be here at six, Rigo. We'll tow it round tomorrow morning." He walked back to the Margarita with a wary kind of happiness in him . . .

Rigo was waiting for him at six. He'd brought his motor boat around from its moorings lower down the beach and already had a tow rope onto the bows of the lighter. It had a powerful twelve-horse-power engine and, so long as it was allowed to take its time, would pull anything that could be loaded into the lighter.

Piled in the stern of the motor boat was a jumble of stores. Not until they were on the *Maria* could they tell exactly what they would want. Kate came down with him. Looking over her shoulder as they put out in the motor boat from the quayside, she said, " Is that the girl? "

Thorne turned. Sitting on a loose stone block by the shelter was the girl, Juana. She wore jeans and a pink shirt, and she was smoking . . .

Rigo had the wheel. Thorne watched him handling the weight and pull of the lighter. There was something deliberate but sensitive in Rigo's movements and to the smallest action he gave his full attention.

They ran out towards the mouth of the bay and the Cabo de Perada. Close on their left hand the steep face of the peninsula went up through crag and pine to the high grey bare ridges. Meeting the open sea as the lighthouse on the point came up on the port hand, the wind freshened a little and an awkward chop began to slap at the bows of the motor boat. The run round to Agua Gelida might take three hours. Thorne, sitting with Kate, was silent. In his mind he was figuring out the possible cargo loads from the *Maria*.

Without looking back, Rigo said, " There is a story, señor, in Palma, that you and your partner stopped Guido from going to the auction."

" That we drugged him? "

" It has been mentioned."

" Well, we didn't."

" That is what I think. He is wild when he drinks."

" You know him well? " asked Kate.

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" Both of them. When I was a boy my father was their boatman at Ermano. We played together." He bent forward and eased the throttle back. They were around the point and had the wind astern.

" Well, you won't be playing with them now," said Thorne.

Rigo turned and smiled. " We finished playing when I was fourteen, señor. Like that." He snapped his fingers. " The curtain comes down and I am my father's son, and they are Manascos."

Rigo bent forward to the throttle. The engine gathered speed, and there was a jerk as the slack came up on the tow rope to the lighter. He looked back, seeing the small, broken bow waves smacking against the broad snout of the lighter. Little fans and sprays of water went high and drifted inboard. Suddenly Thorne stood up so that he could get a good look into the lighter. Three inches of water washed over the bottom boards.

" Ease up, Rigo."

" What's the matter? " asked Kate.

" The lighter's taking water."

They drifted and he pulled the lighter slowly close up astern of the motor boat. He climbed aboard while Rigo held the two boats together. Splashing through the water, he went aft and inspected the bilge cock. It was secure.

He straightened up, frowning. There was nothing like enough sea going for the lighter to have shipped three inches of water. Then he saw that the water was running in fast from the bows. He went forward, bending low. Three feet back from the bows and on either side, four holes about half an inch in diameter had been drilled just above the water line. Coming out of the bay and rounding the point, the steady smack of water on the bows had sent water inboard through the holes. With three inches of water aboard, the lighter was sitting lower in the sea. All the holes were now below the water line and the sea was spurting in through them.

" There's a little beach." Rigo's hand waved towards the far cliffs. " If we get her in she could be beached in shallow water."

" Get going then, I'll see what I can do here."

He started to plug the holes with tow, twisting the stuff up into tight wads and forcing it into the holes. But the tow was soft and useless. After a little while in the water it went limp and the pressure of the sea outside forced it out. He went from one hole to another, renewing the plugs, but he knew that he was fighting a losing battle. The motor boat was labouring along now, Rigo pushing her as fast as he dared, but the water was rising fast . . . faster even than Thorne would have imagined from the eight holes in the bows. He stood with the water creeping up his legs and watched the cliffs come closer. The lighter jerked and wallowed behind the motor boat. One moment the tow rope would be slack and the next it would sing like a harp string.

The sun sparkle went from the water as they entered the dark shadow of the cliffs. The sea smacked at the base of the cliffs and the air boomed with the noise.

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Closer in, there was an ugly swell running, and now the lighter lifted with a sluggish movement, water seethed and swirled down its length, and the tow rope parted. The loose end came back in an untidy swing, like the sweep of a gigantic cow's tail. It hit Thorne on the shoulder and sent him sprawling.

He heard Rigo shout. The lighter refused to lift to the next swell and the water swept over it.

Rigo brought the motor boat round and, cutting the engine, ran to the stern with a new tow rope. He stood there, waiting to throw it. As it came through the air and Thorne grabbed at it, the lighter lifted, and from the corner of his eye he saw the cliffs very close and a sudden boiling of white water.

The black flank of the lighter reared up like a clumsy sea-cow and then crashed down on a hidden rock.

Thorne went overboard and swam to the motor boat. As he stood up he saw the lighter smash down once more on the rock and then slide off it and out of sight. He looked at Kate, her face full of misery. "Well, that's that!" he said savagely.

They came into Agua Gelida and made fast alongside the *Maria*. Thorne went into the captain's saloon with Kate, and stripped off, and changed his clothes.

Rigo entered with a flask of wine and three glasses. He poured wine for them. Then as Rigo put his glass down he nodded through the thick plate-glass window that gave on to the bridge.

Away on the little rise above the beach, Juana, still in jeans and a pink blouse, was standing watching the ship.

Thorne picked up his clothes and began to wring them out. "Well, she's taught us one lesson. You can never get up too early."

As he said it, he had no anger. The thing had gone deeper than anger. It was now a militant hardness. If nothing hung on this at all now; if the profit involved concerned only a few pesetas, he couldn't have been turned aside.

"This afternoon," he said to Rigo, "we'll rig a tackle from the forward derrick, and get those loose timber baulks away from the fore-hatch."

They worked through the afternoon until the sun, dropping into the sea behind the cliffs against which the *Maria* lay so closely, cast a great purple stain of shadow over the water. The forward steam winch could be operated by hand and, using this with a block and tackle rigged from the long boom of the derrick just forward of the bridge, they got a rope neck round one end of a baulk, raised it, and swung it outboard. When it was almost on the point of balance over the side they lowered it to the rail. Then, running out enough rope to take the fall to the water, they eased the baulk beyond the balance-point with their crowbars. In the afternoon they sent ten of the baulks overboard and each time Rigo, stripped to his drawers, would dive over and unship the rope neck from the end of the baulk for the next lift.

There was a moment of satisfaction for Thorne as each baulk hung for a second off balance and then crashed into the sea.

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Rigo would go in after it and come back with the free rope, dripping with water, his handsome face and curly black hair shining in the sun. For Thorne there was a strange contentment in the work.

As the light went they packed up and went into the cabin. Kate had laid out a meal of fruit, cheese, and wine for them. Eating, Thorne got out a pencil and paper and made a list of further equipment they would need. " You go back tonight, Rigo, and see what you can do about these things."

He looked across at Kate. " I think you'd better go with him. Somebody's got to phone Peroni. Tell him to scout around all the little fishing-places and see if he can pick up another lighter."

" Yes, Nick."

" Now you've seen what the set-up is, you can bring stores out. There's going to be a lot for you to do out here." He grinned at her, and then turned to Rigo. " Keep an eye on that motor boat, Rigo. We don't want any holes bored in that."

" Nobody will touch the boat, señor. I shall sleep in it."

Before Rigo left he got him to go ashore and bring out the small rowing-boat. It belonged to Johnny. The Manascos had another boat hauled up under a bamboo-roofed shelter at the far end of the beach near the little spring of fresh water.

When Rigo went down to the motor boat Nick stood with Kate at the top of the steps. He put his arms round her and kissed her.

" I'd rather stay with you," she said.

" I know . . . Still, things have to be done." He kissed her again, feeling her warm against him.

He watched them go off into the darkness, the beat of the motor slowly dying in the black gulf of the bay.

About ten o'clock he went ashore in the rowing-boat to fill a can with water from the spring. He would need it for washing and drinking in the morning. There was a soft wind coming in from the sea and the night was clear.

The boat ran up onto the beach and he got out and began to plug his way through the loose sand towards the spring. Driftwood and sun-dried sea-wrack crackled under his feet. The spring was on the far side of the beach, just below the villa. It came down from the low bank, through a narrow slide which someone had concreted into a gutter shape, and then fell from a rusty iron spout onto the sand.

A patch of feathery bamboos marked the foot of the bank, and a small path led through them. He pushed through the bamboos and halted in front of the iron spout. There was no water coming through it and the long concrete gutter was dry.

" The bastards," he said softly. There was one thing about the Manasco family, he thought: they used everything.

Water-can in hand, he followed the course of the little stream across a piece of cactus-studded ground and up to the garden wall of the villa. It came out under the wall through a large drainpipe. Thorne looked at the wall, at the roof of the villa showing over it, and then at the terraced hill away to the left.

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He moved along the wall which ran parallel with the beach. Where it met the hillside it turned back at an angle, but a rough flat-stone wall sloped up the hill enclosing the garden. Thorne went up the side of the wall. The slope grew steeper and he was soon quite close to the cliffside with the sea a hundred feet below him. The wall finished at the foot of a bare rock face. He climbed over and found himself on a terrace path. In the starlight a row of almond trees stood old and thin. The stream came out of a crack in the bare rock face in an untidy dribble.

He took the stopper off his can and filled it. As he straightened up, he heard a growl to his left. He swung round. Five yards from him at the head of the path coming up through the terraced garden was Juana's black Alsatian, Eduardo.

Its hackles were up and it was coming forward, slowly, taking one step after another with a menacing delicacy of movement, and its head was lowered. As it moved, it grumbled and growled as though it were rolling boulders round and round inside its stomach.

Thorne stood very still.

The dog stopped two yards from him. Thorne knew that he had only to move and the dog would be at his throat.

He didn't know how long they stood, watching one another. But he knew that Eduardo was capable of keeping it up much longer than he could. Eventually he would have to move, and it needed only the drop of a hand, a flex of shoulders, to set the dog in motion.

Beyond the dog, in the shadows at the head of the path by the wall, something moved. A white movement like the sweep of a bird's wing. Juana came out of the darkness and stood just behind the dog. Eduardo didn't move, but the growling went to a higher, snarling pitch of fury.

Gently—his voice on one level—Thorne said, " I never thought I'd be glad to see you. Call him off."

She laughed, and the noise was colder and less musical than the sound of the dribbling water behind him.

" I've only come to watch." And she meant it. Watching the ring and waiting for blood to flow across the sand.

She was dressed for the kill, too. Grande toilette for the death of a matador. The white lace shawl was looped across her back and came through her arms to fall almost to the ground. The evening gown could have been green or red in the starlight, and the tight bodice, strapless, pushed her small breasts high and left the bare, rounded sweep of shoulders and neck to flower nakedly from a firm calyx of silk. She'd brushed her dark hair upwards in a high elaboration of curls. He couldn't have wished for a more beautiful spectator at his throat-tearing . . . or more appreciative. Here was an aficionada who would miss no fine point.

" Call him off."

" You're trespassing. We keep him to guard our property. It is your own fault." She laughed again and Eduardo, encouraged, took a step forward

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" Call him off. If you don't I'll shoot him."

" You wouldn't shoot a dog. Englishmen don't do that."

" Englishmen like to keep their throats in one piece. I'm going to count three and then shoot."

She did nothing for a moment. Then she stepped forward and her hand dropped to the dog's head, barely touching it.

" Eduardo . . . leave." Exorcized, the dog stopped growling, lifted its head, and was suddenly interested in nothing.

" Thank you." He moved, feeling the stiffness break in him, and lifted his water-can. He saw the shine in her eyes and the tiny movement of a gold chain about her throat.

He tipped his head back towards the spring source. " Whose idea was that? "

" Guido's. We've diverted it to the other side for the garden."

" It wasn't worth it. We can always bring our own water."

" Of course."

" But I don't mean to." He was walking towards the wall and she followed him, her hand on the dog's collar. " If it isn't running on the beach in the morning, I'll get some gun-cotton and blast this wall . . . so that the spring runs straight over the cliff."

He lifted the can onto the wall and then climbed up, sitting astride it for a moment. Looking down at her, not feeling anger now, feeling only an even level of obstinacy and determination which, he guessed instinctively, was matched in her, he said, " You did a good job on the lighter."

She made a little movement of her head as though acknowledging a compliment.

He dropped off the wall. She came close up against the piled stones so that only her head and shoulders were showing. Against the grey, ash-coloured hills and the long sweep of stars in the distant cleft of the valley, it was a portrait that would have stopped anyone. She wasn't smiling and she wasn't frowning; she was just being. Nothing in her face except herself. Nothing marred it. No line, no mark of years, or passion passed into habit. It was youth and loveliness, the smooth, velvety immaculateness of newness . . . He suddenly thought of Kate. He was abruptly and angrily aware of disloyalty.

He turned away from her and began to walk down the side of the wall. On the other side she kept him company. In the silence between them he had the uncanny impression that, momentarily, she had been aware of his thoughts and found some defeat in them for him.

" I don't believe you would have shot Eduardo," she said.

" You're right," he said. " But don't get the wrong idea. Only because I didn't have a revolver." He saw her lips tighten and the moment of anger pass across her face because she had been tricked. He laughed, rubbing salt willingly into the wound.

At the bottom of the wall she stopped, before turning towards the villa. Then she said, " You should accept my uncle's offer. This . . . this is only a beginning . . ."

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The next morning early, though he didn't need water, he rowed ashore. The spring was running. He sluiced himself off under the spout and was towelling his face when Manasco came out of the villa courtyard and crossed to the beach edge.

He stood six feet above Thorne and non-committally said, "Buenos días, señor."

He had a red dressing-gown belted tightly about the waist, and the morning breeze took the ends of the robe and swung them about. His legs were bare, brown, and skinny, and the short-cropped sandy hair was ruffled. He was a grizzled, fight-toughened, memory-strengthened ex-flyweight champion of the world.

"You should be sensible," he said.

"I am."

"You can't get this cargo out, and you know it, señor."

"That's your opinion." Manasco laughed, but it wasn't intended to do anything for their relationship.

Then in a meditative tone, a man prepared to be generous when he meets courage mixed with folly in a friend, he said, "I'll be frank. At our first meeting, I think I made a mistake about you. I apologize for the way I received you."

"You mean you're giving me a clean sheet on the drugging charge?"

"If you put it that way."

"But not my partner?"

"No."

"You think he did it without my knowledge and now I have to stand by him?"

"Señor Thorne, I do not wish to discuss the relationship between you and your partner. I am concerned only with you. I try to be a fair man. I am prepared to buy the cargo from you for what you gave. And also to pay for the lighter. But this is the last time I make the offer."

Thorne rubbed the back of his neck with the towel. "This boy Guido means a lot to you, doesn't he?"

"I have no son. He will inherit everything. I have much to teach him."

"You have." Thorne draped the towel over a bamboo and began to button up his shirt front. "To begin with let's get the facts straight. My partner didn't have the boy drugged. I don't know what Guido told you, but the truth is he made a fool of himself. I should have thought the first thing to teach him was that it's bad business to cover mistakes with lies."

Manasco's pale blue eyes blinked behind his glasses and his mouth was suddenly pinched in as though he had bitten at some sharp fruit. "Guido didn't lie."

Thorne shook his head. He bent forward and picked up his towel. The water came down the concrete slide in a thin run, undulating like a silver snake. He could feel his feet sinking into the cushion of wet sand.

"You made me an offer just now, Señor Manasco. I can't take

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it. But I'll make you an offer—to help you and Guido. Guido particularly. I'll sell you the cargo for what we gave for it. But in front of both of us, Guido must admit he's been lying."

"I refuse, Señor Thorne. It is impossible." Manasco cleared his throat noisily as though the sharp taste in his mouth still bothered him.

"And I won't sell without. You go ahead and teach Guido how to buy his way out of a lie—and I'll get my cargo ashore."

"But not to Palma!" There was a snap in the old man's voice like ice breaking.

Thorne shrugged his shoulders and turned away down the beach towards his boat . . . Because of Guido they were in the ring, seconds out.

As he pulled out to the *Maria* he saw Rigo's motor boat round the distant cliff point, with Kate aboard.

Thorne could see Kate's profile, sharp against the cliffs, as they drew in.

"How was Peroni?" he asked, as she climbed aboard the *Maria*.

"Pretty pessimistic. He's had no luck with any lighters . . . What on earth shall we do if we can't find any?"

Touched by the anxiety in her voice, he smiled, reaching out and running a finger down the back of her hand.

"Something will turn up."

For the next two days he and Rigo worked without interruption. They finally cleared the baulks from the forward hatch and twenty of them lay alongside, lashed into a raft. On the second night, with the foredeck free of baulks, they rigged the acetylene lamps on the bridgeworks and got the hatch covers off. The hold was partly flooded.

He and Rigo went down on a rope ladder and found themselves standing, above the water, on a pile of sodden sacks which were stacked above the main cargo.

The water a few feet below them washed gently to and fro with the small motion that was still on the *Maria*. Rigo took out his knife and slit one of the sacks. A yellowish, pulpy mass oozed from it and a sour smell rose into the air.

"What is it?"

Rigo picked up a handful and rubbed it in his fingers. "Flour, señor."

"We'll have to clear it all out and dump it overboard before we can start work."

There was a ropework loading-net folded over part of the sack pile and using this and the deck hoist they began to get the sacks up. It was a filthy, wet job. The sacks were heavy with water and one or two of them had split. As they were lifted a pulpy shower of evil-smelling flour cascaded to the deck. They worked stripped for the night was warm. In an hour their arms and bare torsos were caked with the stuff. Under the strong lights that pushed the night back in a wide circle from the bows of the *Maria*, Thorne had the

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impression that he was on a stage, mercilessly lit and constantly watched. He knew that this night work would provoke interest from the Villa Ermano.

Twice during the evening Kate brought them out coffee. She hung around for a while. Eventually Thorne called to her, "There's nothing you can do, darling. It's late—why don't you turn in?" She nodded and went off.

By midnight they had all the sacks out of the hold and stacked in an untidy mass close to the port bow. A dirty, rank-smelling seepage of flour and water drained from the pile. The back of the job was broken.

The two of them, tired and filthy, climbed on to the baulk raft and, stripping right off, washed themselves down. Thorne dived in and swam out into the dark water. Rigo followed him and for a moment the surface was alive with phosphorescence. Looking back he could see the *Maria*, bulky and brightly lit against the near cliffs.

When he went into the captain's cabin on the bridge the oil lamp was still burning and Kate was asleep in the starboard bunk. It was a warm night and the light blanket covering her had slipped from her shoulders. As he pulled on his pyjamas he heard her mutter once in her sleep.

He looked down at her. She was curled on her side, her head resting on one arm. Her hair was loose on the pillow and above the low neck of her nightdress he could see the smooth line of her breasts. He pulled the blanket over her and then turned out the light.

Lying on his own bunk in the darkness, he listened to the sound of her light breathing. He was tired, his body stretched with fatigue, and there was a physical peace in him which he knew promised deep sleep . . . But sleep wouldn't come. He lay in the darkness and, hearing her breathing, in his mind, he saw another Kate. Slowly, against his will, the image became a bitter disturbance in him. The darkness was full of her, the brown arms and the soft swelling of her breasts, the shadowed moulding of her body, smooth and sweet, running in lines of beauty . . . and with her was the shadow that during the day he could fight away. But tonight it wouldn't go; it was in the cabin, unmoving, haunting his mind, vivid in his thoughts and fancies.

It was like a poison in him, stretching his body to a tenseness—a bitter, jealous agony which he didn't want and hated himself for entertaining. But he was powerless against it. It provoked in him a frustration that left anger far behind, stirring a savageness and self-pity that he despised but could not conquer. Someone else . . . somewhere, just once . . . but someone else . . .

He got up, throwing back his blanket, and left the cabin. He went up into the stern. Rigo slept under a little awning in the bows and he did not want to disturb him. He leaned over the stern rail, smoking, and fighting with himself. This was the worst time he had known and he had to ride out a storm of jealousy and torturing,

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vivid thoughts. He leaned against the rail for a long time, unmoving, feeling his arms go stiff, his fingers clamped against the mahogany runner, letting the pain bite into him. Slowly the storm passed . . .

He was up early the next morning and went over the side for a freshener. Dressed, he felt in a better frame of mind. From the galley came the sound and smell of frying. Rigo had put out a couple of night lines and had been lucky. Kate was already busy on the fish.

She put her head out of the galley and called, " Five minutes! " He went over to Rigo who appeared to be in trouble with the motor boat.

" What is it? " asked Thorne.

" The propeller shaft. Broken, señor."

" To hell with it! " Thorne snapped angrily.

Rigo said, " Towing that water-logged lighter the other day must have opened up some flaw in the shaft."

" That's right," Thorne said. He turned to Rigo. " How long will it take to fix? "

" Can't tell, señor, until I've opened her up. We'll have to beach her, too, to replace the shaft."

" Everything happens to us. Can you check it here? "

" Yes." Rigo began to ferret in a locker for his tools. " If it is a shaft, I'll have to go to Palma for a new one."

Kate was at the head of the steps as he came on deck. He took her arm and grinned ruefully. " This will make good news for Manasco."

" Nick, how awful."

He put his hands under her armpits, turning her towards him. There was a great tenderness and affection in him for her, so great that he was telling himself that he didn't care a damn about anything. Everything in the world could go wrong, but he would beat Manasco. Just that. He would beat Manasco and the thought was a swift intoxication of the spirit.

He laughed.

" Nick, what's come over you? "

" Pig-headedness. I don't know. Call it what you like. But when we beat Manasco, I'm going to take my cut of the profits and my share in the business and we're going back to England—for good."

" Nick . . . To England? "

" Yes. Just that. So whenever you feel Manasco or the fates are against us, just think of that."

Without saying anything, she reached up and kissed him.

Half an hour later Rigo came aboard to report that the shaft had fractured a few inches inboard of the propeller sealing glands. That meant going to Palma for a new shaft.

At the mention of Palma Kate said, " Why don't I go with Rigo? I can drive him down to Palma and back in our car. It'll save time. I could pick up the mail while I'm there, too."

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" I don't want you going down that valley in the dark. What about the dog? " Thorne frowned.

" The dog's kept to the house at night now," said Rigo. " It would be quicker for me to go to Palma by car."

Thorne argued against it for a while, but he could see that this was something Kate wanted to do because she felt it was a definite help. Finally he gave way to her. She could sleep the night at the Hotel Margarita.

That evening, as he rowed them ashore in the dark, he said to Rigo, " You keep away from the road going back."

" Don't worry, señor. I'll look after the señora."

On the beach he held Kate for a moment, his arms round her, and kissed her. Rigo was ahead, waiting

" Look after yourself, darling."

" I'll be all right, Nick dear."

She left him and he watched the two figures slide away into the darkness. He turned back to the boat, smiling. She wanted to help, but he guessed she was anxious to get the mail too. There might be letters from their daughter, Julia, at school in England.

He was on deck, thinking about turning in, when he heard a rowing-boat. The strokes were slow and easy, and after a while he saw the drip of phosphorescence from the blades. He leaned over the side and watched it crab around the raft and then come in to the gangway.

Juana came up the steps, hesitated a moment and then, seeing the glow of his cigarette, came down the deck to him. She wore trousers and a sweater of some dark colour and in the gloom all he could see was the oval of her face. She came up to the rail and leaned against it a yard from him.

" What do you want? " After the disappointment of the motor boat there was an apathy in him. It was late and he was too tired to show any feeling.

" Nothing."

" Just a social call? "

" Why not? I was bored. I wanted someone to talk to."

" You should carry a white flag. And anyway, the rest of your people mightn't like you to fraternize with the enemy."

She laughed. At this moment her manner was so devoid of any antagonism that he began to suspect that the girl with the shotgun, the girl with the dark defiance in her eyes sometimes found her part too intense . . .

Almost as though to prove him right, she said, " Sometimes the people you fight are more interesting than the people you fight for. Anyway, they bore me tonight."

" So you come out here and risk being dropped over the side."

" You would do that? "

" Given the right circumstances."

" I might like it." And then, when he didn't answer, she went on, " Where are Rigo and your wife? "

" They're around."

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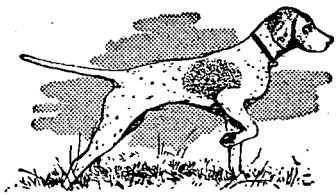

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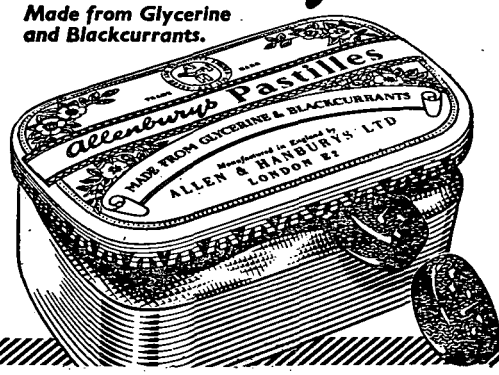

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"I don't think so. I saw you come to the beach and they went off."

"I wonder you didn't set the dog on them."

"If I'd stopped them, I couldn't have come and talked to you. What is the matter with the motor boat?"

"There's no harm in your knowing. The propeller shaft is broken."

"Bad luck."

He turned at that, facing her. She sounded as though she meant it. She was close enough now for him to see the smile on her face.

"You didn't expect me to say that?" she asked.

"I should have thought you would have been delighted."

"So I am—for us. But also it is bad luck for you. One can have sympathy for the matador and the bull."

"Which am I?"

"Oh, the bull."

"Thanks."

Just for a moment she almost giggled. Then she went back to being serious.

"You have strength. Yes, and intelligence, but you do not accept the idea of being killed . . . beaten. That is why, in many ways, I like you."

"You do? I should never have guessed it." He smiled to himself. What was she? Nineteen; perhaps twenty . . . it was a time when life could be serious.

"Yes, I like you—tremendously; even though I'm against you. Stubborn and wilful. You have no chance to win by yourself and yet you go on. It is a wonderful thing to be like that, to believe that you can take the world in your bare hands and crack it apart. No woman ever believes that."

He smiled again in the darkness. He liked that. That's what she wanted to be, almost was . . . a queen out here, among the young men of her set. In this moment of darkness, with the night wind sliding over the still waters, she was showing a new aspect of herself and it attracted him.

"I don't know," he said, keeping the amusement out of his voice. "Cracking the world apart is quite a job."

"Very few men believe they can. But the ones that do . . . Well, they are dangerous for themselves and other people, particularly for women." With a touch of the spirit he had known before, she went on, "I think you're laughing at me."

"No," he lied. "What you say is very interesting. But don't you think you ought to go? I want to turn in."

"And if I don't go?" There was the dark ripple of a new understanding between them, in her voice.

"I'll drop you over the side." She turned to move back along the deck. For an instant—and no man in the world, and maybe not Juana herself, could have said whether it was deliberate—her fingers brushed across his hand on the rail.

"I'm going," she said. "Some other time, perhaps, you'll have

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to drop me overboard." He heard her laughing as she went down the darkness of the gangway to her boat

The next morning after his return from Palma, Rigo, squatting on the stern boards, looked up from his work, and a smile flashed across his brown face as he raised a greasy hand and brushed back his dark curls. " You and I, we begin to make people talk in Palma. I do not think Señor Manasco likes it because he is not a man who wishes to be talked about."

" Whose side are they on? "

" Ours mostly, señor. But they will do nothing about it. Still, they are betting . . . it is something that odds can be found." He straightened his back for a moment, flexing his shoulders so that the muscles slid under the skin like the imprisoned run of waves under an oily sea. " Even in Palma now they know my name. ' Rigo,' they say, ' is with the Englishman.' My father, of course, is angry. It is not right, he thinks, for a man's name to be in too many mouths . . ."

Thorne smiled to himself, liking the thrust of simple pride in Rigo. He wondered whether Kate and Peroni were making any progress in their quest for a lighter. Suddenly irritation and impatience seized him at the thought of Juana's wanton sabotage. He hoped Kate might be back that evening with good news.

From the far side of the beach by the spring came the sound of voices and laughter. Juana and Guido came down from the house with the dog. Thorne saw them go into the water and swim out, the dog going with them. They played about for a time and then came back to the beach. Guido went up to the villa with the dog, but the girl, a wrap over her shoulders, walked across the beach. When she was ten yards from them she dropped the wrap to the sand and sat down.

Thorne gave her a buenos-días and she nodded. Lying back on the wrap, she put her hands behind her head and stared up into the sky. She lay there, long brown legs and arms sprawling, naked except for a flaring red scrap of bathing-suit, and her silent presence was a provocation and embarrassment. Every time their eyes came up from their work she was there.

It amused Thorne. But with Rigo it was different. Juana made him clumsy and angry. Once he stopped work and stared angrily across at her.

" It is not right," he said loudly, " for a woman to show herself like that. It is forbidden by law."

Juana, staring at the sky, gave no sign that she had heard him.

Thorne touched his elbow. " Forget her."

" How can a man forget what is beneath his eyes! " Rigo spat.

For a second there was the faintest sound of laughter from the stretched-out girl.

A belt, thought Thorne, a flat leather belt, like the one his father had used, that would take the arrogance from her. Last night she had been amusing, touching. But as she lay there, idle, beautiful,

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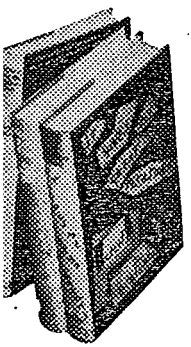

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charged with disturbance, Thorne felt she was a nuisance. She was making Rigo angry, and that was bad for their work.

He walked across to her.

She smiled up at him, blinking her eyes in his shadow, and one leg came up, powdered with sand and flexing easily.

Pleasantly, he said, " Will you do me a favour? "

" You? But of course."

" Then go away."

" Why? " The word was well-fed, plump, and wrapped with a purr of satisfaction.

" Because—as you know—you're disturbing us."

She sat up, looked from him to Rigo and then, still smiling, stood up. He bent down and picked up her wrap and handed it to her. She didn't say anything. She took the wrap from him and her eyes were on him in the way they had been for a time at the end of their first meeting by the gate on the roadway, going over him, cataloguing the points of interest. He knew how she felt; warm with confidence in herself, her strength, and the pleasure that came from the acknowledgment of her power.

She turned and walked away.

As Nick came back Rigo said, " I would not have believed it." His voice was full of respect.

It was early afternoon before the motor boat was finished. Without stopping for food, they took the raft tow lines aboard. The strain came up on the ropes and slowly the raft began to move out behind them. The sea was a little choppy but did no more than run a thin flood of water over the top of the timbers to wash away the loose flour sludge that had seeped from the sacks overnight.

It was necessary to dump the flour out at sea to comply with the local regulations rigidly enforced by Manasco, and the first netload of sacks went over without trouble. But on the next load as they winched the net up from the deck the meshes tore away into a great hole and the sacks thudded back onto the deck. The net ropes, lying so long in the flooded hold, had rotted. It was nothing that couldn't be repaired and Rigo soon had some lengths of rope cut and was busy repairing the loading-net. By the time he had finished, the sun was down.

With darkness, Rigo took the skiff and rowed ashore. They had both eaten in the galley. Thorne watched him row away and then went up to the captain's saloon.

Kate hadn't turned up, and now that it was dark, he guessed she would stay over at the Margarita. He couldn't really believe that Domingo would have any luck with the lighters.

He put a bottle of whisky on the table and, with the oil lamp lit, stretched out on the bunk, feeling as though he had lived most of his life on the *Maria*.

He had reached for his glass, taken a sip, and coupled it with a silent toast to Manasco's damnation, when a lilting voice said, " Good evening."

Surprised, he slid his legs off the bunk and turned.

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Juana was standing in the cabin doorway.

Frowning, he said sharply, "What are you doing here?"

"Visiting. Don't look so cross."

He groaned to himself. He was in no mood to deal with her. He saw the role she'd cast for herself tonight, and he knew she would overplay it.

"I don't know that I want to be visited. And don't tell me that you rowed out here in that outfit."

"Of course." She smiled. "I only had to pull the skirt up above my knees a little." As she spoke she pulled at the tight green skirt, sketching a demonstration, and before it fell he caught the flash of her nylons and the shapeliness of her legs. "Do you like it?" She swung around gently so that he could see the dress.

He had to admit that however she might play the part, she looked it. Femme fatale . . . some conception of herself concocted from too much cinema, or too much imagination.

It was a close-fitting green silk dress that seemed to make her taller, that gave her a dignity and a maturity that she needed. Her arms and shoulders were bare, and her hair was held with a half-circlet of sparkling diamanté, and from the calyx of the bodice her breasts curved in a beautiful brown smoothness. "Do you like it?" she repeated.

"Yes, I do," he said truthfully, "but it's not what I should recommend for salvage work. Also, I think you should go back."

"But I've only just got here." She came across to the cabin table, moving slowly like a cat, smiling, and obviously enjoying the physical rhythm of her legs and body under the gown. He caught the fragrance of her perfume.

She put out a hand and touched his glass.

"Is this whisky?" The movement brought her head forward and he saw the gloss laid on her hair by the cabin light and for the first time noticed that in one hand she held a white Spanish shawl.

"Yes," he said. He didn't feel strong enough to cope with her. If she was bored at the villa why didn't she find someone else to plague? "Why don't you go home? Your uncle would give you hell if he knew you were out here."

"Would he?" She picked up his glass. "Can I taste it? I've never had whisky."

"Look," he said deliberately, "I don't want to be rude, even though you're a Manasco. But I don't want you here."

She drank a little of the whisky and then made a face. "It's terrible. How can you drink it?" She put the glass down and he saw the mark of her dark lipstick on the rim. She came round the table and sat at his side. "And don't keep telling me to go home. Your wife isn't here and Rigo is with his father tonight. Do you know why Rigo is helping you?" She picked up his cigarette case and helped herself. He found himself holding a match for her.

"Because," he said harshly, "he doesn't like living in someone else's pocket. Like me, he doesn't take kindly to being kicked around." What did he have to do? Throw her out. And the girl

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I took a timetable out of my suit- se and began reading quietly in ie manner prescribed, the names about one hundred railway sta- ons. I observed that, after reading em over a few times, I could recite ie whole list off with hardly a istake. With a little more prac- ce I found I had committed them completely to memory that I uld remember them in the reverse der and even pick out one station om the list and say which number was, and what were the names of ie towns before and after it.

I was astonished at the memory had acquired and spent the rest f my journey on more and more difficult experiments in memory, and reflecting how this new control I was achieving over my mind would materially help me to a greater success in life. After this, I worked hard at this wonderful memory system, and within a week I found I could recall passages from books and quote them with ease; names, addresses and business appointments were remembered immediately; and in four months I had succeeded in learning Spanish.

If I have obtained from life a measure of wealth and happiness, it is to that book I owe it, for it revealed to me the workings of my brain.

Three years ago, I had the good fortune to meet its author, and I promised him to propagate his method, and today I am glad of this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to him.

I can only suppose that others wish to acquire what is, after all, the most valuable asset towards success in life.

Borg's address is: B. R. Borg, c/o Aubanel Publishers, 14 Lower Baggot St., Dublin, Ireland. Apply to him for his little book, "The Eternal Laws of Success." It is free to all who wish to develop their memory.

F. ROBERTS.

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was a fool anyway. She was playing around without a thought of her safety. A man could start off by being amused or annoyed . . . but that neck and bosom, the long shapely legs, and the body that could make the blood hot . . .

Juana laughed. " If he said that, he's a liar. I'll tell you why. We were children together. Rigo, Guido, and myself. Always together, swimming, fishing, and boating. Then we grew up and he thought it would be the same . . ." She looked sideways at him, her eyes sparkling, the dark red mouth for a moment partly open and touched with provocation. " He thought we could share other things together. He wanted to make love to me. So he had to be told that he was a fisherman's son and sent away. That is all—and for that he hates all the Manascos. Simply because he hates the truth about himself."

Thorne leaned back against the bunk. He really was angry with her now. " You've no idea how pleased you sound," he said, and he didn't disguise the hint of contempt in his voice. But it didn't touch her.

" If I'm pleased, it's because I'm here with you." Her hand dropped on his.

" You talk too much," he said sharply. " What are you looking for—trouble? "

" Trouble? " She gave the word a new meaning, and she laughed. " If you call it that. I like talking to you. I like being with you. If it's the truth, why shouldn't I say it? "

" You don't even begin to understand what truth is. The truth about yourself. Everything is a wonderful game to you. Now—we've had our little dose of philosophy—will you please go home? "

" When you're cross I like you even more. That's the truth. Whatever you feel is the truth . . ." She looked in front of her, absorbed by her own romantic convictions, deep in her part. " Whatever you feel. Whatever you want. That's what truth is. That's why I'm here. I want to know—what is the truth about you, Nick? "

He didn't know whether he was more weary or more angry. *What is the truth about you, Nick?* Even in a third-rate film it was a speech that would fall with a thud. And yet, oddly, somewhere it touched him, somewhere deep down it amused him and brought back a flash of liking for her.

" The truth about me is that I'm sleepy and want to go to bed." At once he knew he had done no good. Her face softened, came close to him, and he could see the moist shine on her lips.

" You're tired," she said gently and she raised her hand and laid it flat against his cheek, caressing him, and her other hand took one of his. He felt the movement of her fingers against his skin, on his face. And her other hand was warm in his, small, curled, and moving gently.

Abruptly he was aware that his fingers were entwined with hers, mastering hers . . .

He stood up suddenly, gripping her by the arms and pulling her

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up, too. "You're being a fool," he said. "You're asking for trouble . . ."

"You're shaking me!"

"You need to be shaken," he said roughly. "You need the nonsense shaken out of you." He dropped his hands from her.

She stood close to him and he saw her body stirring with her breathing. She smiled, and in a quiet, submissive voice said, "Why do you pretend you don't understand? There's nothing wrong about it. It doesn't matter what there is between you and my uncle. That has nothing to do with me. I have my own life to live . . ."

He was angry then, the fury in him flashing into the open, shocked into violence and confusion.

"Go away! Go home—you're crazy!" He began to pull at her arm, but even as he shouted she moved to him. The warmth of her body was inside his arms and her mouth for a moment clumsily on the side of his face, and then on his lips.

The anger that had wanted to reject her was unexpectedly an exultant traitor in him and he was crushing her, feeling the movement of silk and flesh under his hands. He wanted to push her away but she clung to him, her mouth now soft and seeking against his; and the power of her lips on his, the sweetness of her body in his arms loosened a response in him that he could not subdue. His hands were on her bare shoulders and she raised her head and smiled at him and her body stirred with a long sigh. He saw her eyes blurred with emotion and her lips parted as she said his name.

He wanted to push her away, to throw her from him, but his arms held her. He felt her hands move about his neck and his lips came down to hers. As they kissed, the cabin seemed filled with a great silence, holding them immobile, locked together . . . And then into the stillness, beating through to him, forcing itself upon him came a distant laboured throbbing. Suddenly his mind was cleared by anger, swift and comprehending.

He flung her away from him. She staggered back against the table and dropped awkwardly to the floor. He looked down at her, cramped against the table, a heap of green silk and brown flesh, the yellow lamplight gleaming on the long length of her nylons as her legs sprawled across the floor.

"You clever devil," he breathed. "You—"

He stepped over her and ran for the door. The noise he had heard was that of Rigo's motor boat labouring seawards. And he'd thought she was an impressionable girl playing with fire.

He raced along the length of the deck to the stern.

At the bottom of the gangway the Villa Ermano skiff was tied up. But the timber raft and his motor boat had gone. Far down the bay he could hear the labouring noise of the engine. For a moment he thought he could make out the dark bulk of the raft against the star-sprinkle of light on the water. While Juana had been with him others had cut the raft free and eased her out. When they were well

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clear of the *Maria* they had started the motor, keeping her throttled down until they judged there was no danger of being caught.

He jumped into the skiff and slipped the painter free. He pulled her round with a great boil of water under the blades of the oars and, bending his back to it, sent her racing towards the sea. She was light and she was fast. The motor boat and raft couldn't make much speed—but already they were well on their way down the bay. Once at sea, he knew what would happen. The raft lashings would be cut and the great timbers drift away on the current. But worse than that, the motor boat would be piled up somewhere on the coast. Another raft could be made from the timbers over the after-hold, but another motor boat . . . He swore savagely as he pulled. He could imagine the scene next morning: Manasco and Guido blank-faced at his protests.

The running ripples of the sea smacked at the bows of the skiff. Above the suck and knuckly drive of the oars against water and rowlocks, he heard the thin, lonely cry of a seabird. Two lights showed shoreward. The pale slip from the *Maria*'s saloon and a brighter light from the villa. He kept position by them. Through a light drift of cloud a few stars weakened the flat black metal of the sky. The chafe of the oars rubbed rawness into his palms and the muscles of his shoulders cracked each time he came back for his stroke. Ahead of him the engine noise rose higher.

Looking round he saw clearly for an instant the black loom of the raft a good three hundred yards ahead. Like a cold hand on his hot face he felt the sudden touch of the sea wind as he cleared the point of the bay. At the same time he heard the engine sound die. The silence put new energy into him. The drive of the skiff, biting now into a slow swell, drove cold fans of water back from the bows over his shoulders.

They didn't see him until he was almost on the raft. He swung into it broadside, shipping his port oar. He recognized Guido and the manservant from the villa. They were at the corner of the raft farthest from the motor boat, cutting away at the lashings. One great timber on the outside of the raft was already free except for the lashing at the fore-end.

The manservant shouted a warning to Guido and came across the wet timbers to prevent Thorne boarding. He came cautiously, awkwardly across the slippery baulks, a knife in his hand. As he reached the edge of the raft Thorne rose in the skiff which bumped alongside and, grabbing an oar, swung it in a low arc. It crashed against the man's thigh and sent him rolling across the timbers.

Thorne jumped aboard and lurched across the swaying platform towards Guido. The young man saw him coming but went on cutting away at a lashing until Thorne was within three yards of him. Then he straightened up and, knife in hand, came for him. He was shouting and swearing and his face was twisted into ugliness. He jumped at Thorne, striking wildly with the knife.

It was all so inexpert and abandoned that it was almost with reluctance that Thorne hit him. But hit him he did, to avoid the

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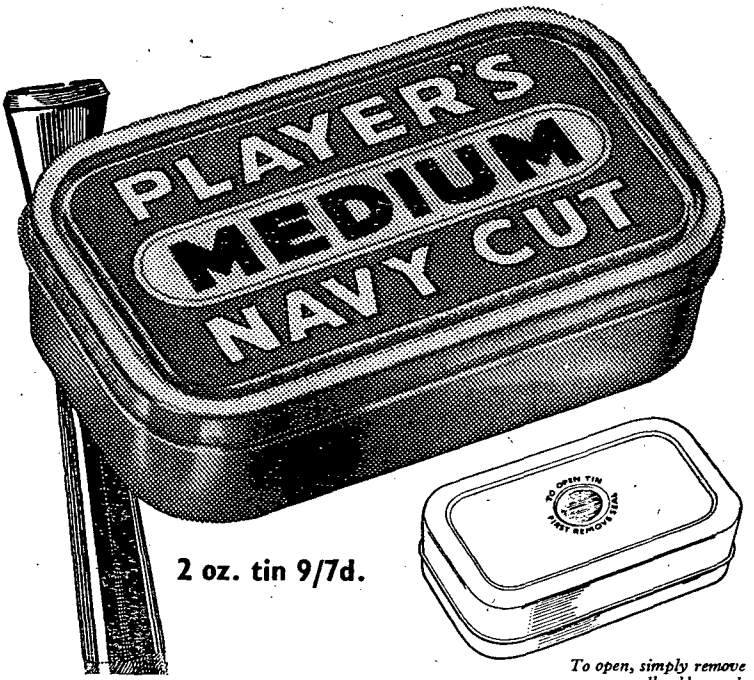

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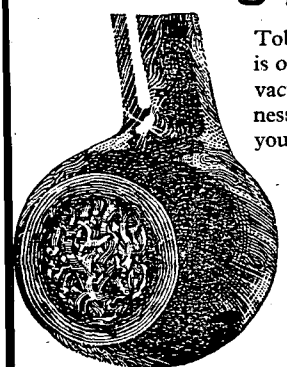

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knife. He slapped him brutally on the side of the face, saw the knife jerk from the right hand and fly into the darkness. As the young man fell he knew that Guido was drunk. For a second, before the sea air shredded it away, the odour of brandy was about him.

The pitch of the raft threw Guido forward. As he slid over the edge into the water, the manservant shouted something from behind Thorne. He turned to find the man rushing at him, knife raised. As the blade flashed downwards Thorne side-stepped and smashed his fist into the side of the man's face. He swayed backwards and fell, spread-eagled against the small pile of sacks in the centre of the raft. The knife was still in his hand.

Thorne went forward and stood over him. "Throw the knife away," he ordered. "Throw it away, or I'll come in and smash you!" The man hesitated and then with a slow movement he pitched the knife into the sea.

Thorne turned. Guido in his fall had slid over the edge of the raft and was now clinging to the end of the great timber which had scissored loose from the after end of the raft. The timber baulk began to swing back towards its fellows. As the gap closed there was danger that Guido would be crushed between them.

"Señor, please! He is—"

"I know. Drunk." Thorne went to the edge of the raft and waited for the timber to swing in. He stopped it with his foot and bent down and caught Guido by the shoulder.

"I should let you crush and drown," said Thorne contemptuously. "You know why, don't you?" He shook him, holding him still half in the water. "You lied to your uncle, didn't you? You started all this trouble."

"Señor, he doesn't know what you say . . ." the manservant pleaded. Guido's face was white, his eyes closed.

"He knows. He just won't face it!"

Suddenly Thorne was too tired and disgusted to bother with him. He dragged the boy out onto the timbers. Guido lay there, panting, his face hidden in the crook of his arm.

"Keep an eye on him," said Thorne to the servant. He went forward, hauled on the tow rope, and brought the motor boat alongside the raft. He climbed aboard, started the engine, and brought the raft around, heading back for the *Maria*, steering by the distant villa light. He didn't bother about the Ermano skiff. If they wanted it they could search for it tomorrow.

He looked back once or twice. Guido was sitting up now and the servant stood alongside him. When they were almost abeam of the *Maria* he cut the engine and beckoned to the manservant. He came shambling forward and stood a few yards from him on the end of the raft.

"All right," said Thorne. "Get over the side, both of you, and swim ashore. He can manage it now." The man began some protest, half words, half gesture, but Thorne, hard with contempt for them both, cut him short.

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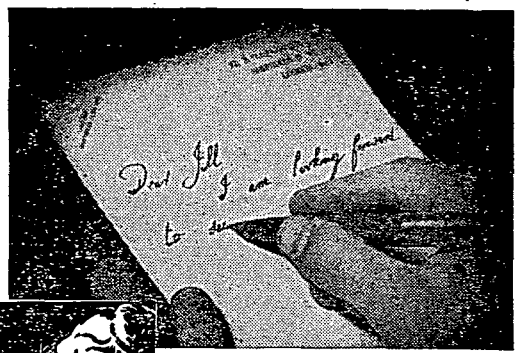

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" Get over, or I'll come across and sling you in."

He watched the man go back to Guido, heard Guido's voice rise, and then saw the man urge him forward. A moment later he saw them slip into the night sea and heard them going back in a splashing, clumsy progress towards the beach.

He had a little trouble manœuvring raft and motor boat alongside the *Maria*, but finally it was done. As he stood on deck making the last line fast to the deck rail he thought he heard the sound, away in the darkness towards the beach, of oars against rowlocks.

He went forward to the captain's saloon. He was tired and against his anger there was not even a flush of warmth from his victory. At the cabin door he remembered Juana. He had taken her skiff. There had been no way for her to get off the *Maria*.

He jerked open the door. She stood in the centre of the cabin. There was no smile now. No fear, either, for there was nothing of Guido's weakness in her.

In a steady voice she said, " Yes, it was to help Guido that I came aboard. That's how it began—"

" I don't want to listen! "

" But you must. Everything's changed. I didn't know it would, but it has. If you wanted it now, I'd help you, even against my uncle—"

" Get out! " She had courage, but he wanted none of her.

" But, Nick, you must see—"

" Out! " He jerked his head to the door behind him.

" Don't be so angry, Nick."

" What the hell do you expect me to be? Get off this boat."

" How—in the motor boat? There's no skiff. I saw you come back."

" I don't care a damn how. Swim! "

She drew her head up, a movement that reinforced all the arrogant strength in her, and coldly she said, " You will take me in the motor boat." It was an order, intimidating, wiping away all suggestion of guilt or shame.

He was on her so quickly that she had no time to defend herself. He caught her wrists, spun her round, and then she was in his arms as he lifted her from the ground. She fought and struggled, swearing at him. He carried her through the door and to the deck. She tried to bite at his shoulder, but he smothered her against him.

Clamping his arms about the kicking, leaping protest of her body, he went steadily up the fore-deck until he stood in the high flaring bows. The struggle between them now was silent except for the driving sound of her breath as she fought against the binding pressure of his arms. A shoe clattered to the boards as she threshed with her legs. Then, as he shifted his arms, bracing himself to lift and drop her, he felt the fight go from her. Her face came back from his shoulder and she was suddenly laughing, the vibration moving through her body and into his. Before he could avoid them, her lips came up and kissed his.

He jerked her from him over the rail, conscious for a second of

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the wide-flung shawl, and the flash of legs bared by her worked-up skirt. Her laughter was killed by the sound of the splash.

He turned away from the rail and stood there for a moment, his eyes shut against the fatigue in him.

When he opened them it was to see a figure outlined in the light from the saloon window: Kate standing on the deck a few yards from him . . .

★ *Victor Canning, who had his first novel published when he was twenty-three, is now in his early forties, lives in a Tudor cottage in Kent. He has a catholic taste both in pets and literature, though he prefers biography to fiction and never touches thrillers. The pets probably run into triple figures, including chickens, two Siamese cats, a cocker spaniel, a Dutch parrot (at least it speaks only Dutch, so presumably is a Dutch national), half a dozen lizards, and two terrapins. These last live in a tank and are really the property of Canning's teenage daughters.*

His first ambition was to be a sailor but, after failing the Navy's tough medical, he contents himself with sailing a friend's boat at Woodbridge and the marine exploits of his heroes—such as Nick Thorne whose final adventures appear in next month's Argosy on sale Feb. 8.

SOLUTION to COLD BLOWS THE WIND on page 36

1. *Charles Kingsley.*
2. *Typhoon occurs only in China seas; hurricane only in West Indies.*
3. *Anemone, kestrel.*
4. *Dead area in equatorial regions where trade winds meet.*
5. *a. Kenneth Grahame; b. Richard Hughes; c. Jacques Perret.*
6. *St. Paul, whose ship was caught and wrecked by it at Malta.*
7. *We thought of Simoom, Sirocco, Samiel, Solano, and, of course, the variations on Southerly.*
8. *Comes from the Beaufort Scale, invented by Sir Francis Beaufort, 1806, defines a hurricane: wind force of over 75 m.p.h.*

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across. 1, *Lick his chops.* 8, *Sampler.* 9, *Restful.* 12, *Rags.* 13, *Plain.* 14, *Hist.* 17, *No stamp.* 18, *Scuttle.* 19, *My Heart.* 22, *Caramel.* 24, *Cove.* 25, *Firth.* 26, *Fell.* 29, *Long ago.* 31, *Denizen.* 32, *Miss Milligan.*

Down. 1, *Limoges.* 2, *Cole.* 3, *Harelip.* 4, *Straits.* 5, *Hiss.* 6, *Sou.* 7, *Astronomical.* 10, *Feint.* 11, *Let well alone.* 15, *Salad.* 16, *Curry.* 20, *Haven.* 21, *Tripoli.* 22, *Citadel.* 23, *Muezzin.* 27, *Rats.* 28, *Snag.* 30, *Ohm.*

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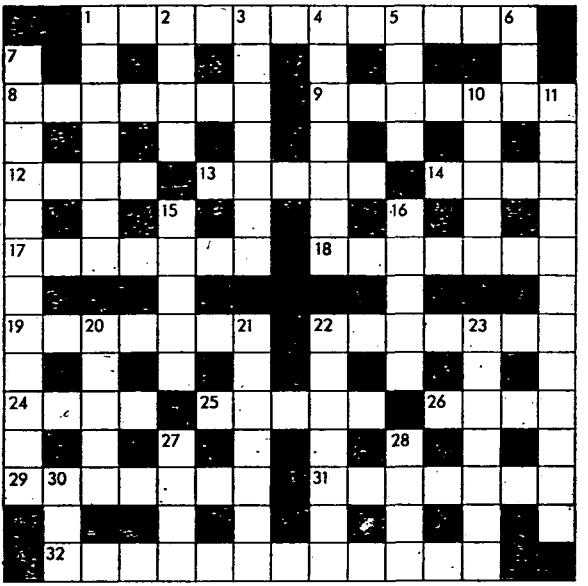
ARGOSY CROSS-WORD

★

Solution on Page 143

★



CLUES

Across

1 A lucky dog can do it before and during lunch (4, 3, 5).

8 Takes embroidery specimens, maybe (7).

9 Fluster may become placid (7).

12 Horseplay reduces clothes to this (4).

13 Obvious and level ground (5).

14 Call for silence (4).

17 Enough to upset a postman (2, 5).

18 Run off carrying coal (7).

19 Richard Jefferies wrote the story of it (2, 5).

22 Browned-off sugar (7).

24 Common man on a rocky coast (4).

25 Forth, not back (5).

26 Fierce Moor ? (4).

29 Days of yore (4, 3).

31 Does he inhabit a den ? (7).

32 Her other name was Patience (4, 8).

Down

1 French town famed for enamel (7).

2 A merry old king (4).

3 Help ! Air ! But could it cure this blemish ? (7).

4 Deep waters ? Certainly narrow (7).

5 Sound disapproval (4).

6 Take coin from soup but leave the pea (3).

7 Film stars' salaries are, perhaps ? (12).

10 Sounds like a feeble pretence (5).

11 Pussy should have minded the adage (3, 4, 5).

15 These days need not be raw (5).

16 Comb of stable, not kitchen, use (5).

20 You can't export this port (5).

21 Excursion to troubled oil in N. Africa (7).

22 " Mountain-built with peaceful ——" (Keats) (7).

23 He summons the Faithful to prayer (7).

27 They are found in Prats-de-Llusanes (4).

28 An obstacle has muddled the horses (4).

30 Was the German physicist a live wire ? (3).

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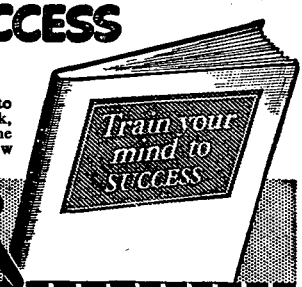

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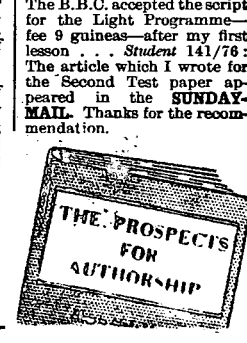
Student 357/3015: I have had my story accepted by **BLACKWOODS** who are paying me £25 for it. . *Student* 778/2119: I thought it might interest you to know that **THE COUNTRYMAN** has accepted a short article of mine on an old country custom . . . *Student* 184/315: As you suggested, I submitted the articles to the **NEW STATESMAN**. One was published on the 17th July. I have also had an article accepted by **MEN ONLY** . . . *Student* 181/282: You may be interested to hear that I had a letter from the Editor of **ARGOSY**; they offered me Twenty-five Guineas for my story . . . *Student* 591/287: You will be pleased that my article submitted for my Second Lesson was published in the **DAILY MIRROR** and I received Six Guineas for it . . . *Student* 120/288: I have established contact with the Editor of **PUNCH**. The item was accepted for "Charivaria" and is a good start . . . *Student* 1179/347: I succeeded in getting four Big Game stories into **COURIER** and another about "Shrove Tuesday." Another article appeared in the August issue of **BLACKWOODS** . . . *Student* 1954/157: I have just corrected a proof of my story for **WIDE WORLD**: they have since accepted another and I have sent in a third . . . *Student* 171/162: I have sold my story to **EVERYWOMAN** for 25 guineas . . . *Student* 1106/156: The B.B.C. accepted the script for the Light Programme—fee 9 guineas—after my first lesson . . . *Student* 141/76: The article which I wrote for the Second Test paper appeared in the **SUNDAY MAIL**. Thanks for the recommendation.



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